THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

THE CITY IN SPACE AND TIME

Development of the Urban Form and Space of Suzhou until 1911

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ABSTRACT

The city of Suzhou boasts a history that begins in 514 B.C. The development of this city's urban form in the imperial era (221 B.C.-A.D. 1911) is regarded as a continuation of its construction as the state capital of Wu in the sixth century B.C. This thesis presents a study of two aspects of the history of this very important city. It deals firstly with the cosmological symbolism of the earliest city as systematised by authors of mainly Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220) documents to express the historical struggle for survival between Wu and the state of Yue, and secondly, with how the city of Suzhou, as a physical structure, developed both in reality and in theory in the subsequent two millennia. The main purpose of the study is not to produce a comprehensive historiography of this city. Instead, by taking Suzhou as a specific case, it aims at addressing a number of important characteristics of city building and development in pre-modern China, upon which an appropriate approach to studies of the traditional Chinese cities can be based.

Two ideas have informed this study. The first is that the city was given form not only by the practices and ideas that derived from its social, economic, and political circumstances, but also by a set of changing values and beliefs that were an integral part of a world view - a characteristic way of both looking at and shaping the world. The pragmatic examination of the city in its various contexts is therefore frequently accompanied by an inquiry into the conceptual realms of the Chinese; and, for the purpose of this study, the way in which the city was perceived by the Chinese in history is taken as no less important than what the city really looked like. The second idea is that cities in pre-modern China were profoundly differentiated in space and time, and no one ideal construct can suffice to explain their varied and complex urban histories. On the other hand, it has been taken in this thesis as axiomatic that common elements existed in these cities so that they were culturally Chinese. Thus, Suzhou is treated as *a* Chinese city in the sense that it was firmly embedded in the urban context of pre-modern China.

This study begins with a description of the historic and cultural background against which Suzhou rose and declined. The main body of the thesis is composed of three parts. First, it demonstrates in what specific way the city was believed to have been built as a cosmic centre, as perceived by Eastern Han scholars. This is a symbolic theme that may have combined elements drawn from the local traditions and the culture of Central China at the time of the building, involving the cosmological synthesis of the Han. It later came to be viewed as a source of historical

authority and continued to inform the city's further development. Second, since a fundamental change in the nature of China's city system occurred from the Qin (221-206 B.C.) unification on, the thesis discusses a number of general, disputable issues concerning city building and development in the imperial era. These issues arise from three areas, namely the nature of regional and local cities, the transformation of urban space in time, and the urban-rural relationship. This part provides a larger historic and theoretical context of urban development, in which the investigation of the transformation of the city of Suzhou is placed

The third part concentrates on the development of Suzhou in the imperial era, especially from the late ninth century on, when its important growth started. A number of issues are discussed in this part. It demonstrates that the form and size of the city, physically defined by the city walls that had been reconstructed many times, remained basically unchanged at least from 1229 throughout subsequent history, whereas remarkable urban expansion during the late imperial period was not confined by the city walls. It illustrates that the network of city canals functioned as a framework for the spatial organisation of city structures on the one hand, and that its partial decay and the efforts to maintain it in the first half of the Qing period (1644-1911), reflect the enormous economic and demographic pressure on the existing water system on the other. This part shows how the geometrical centre of the city was demoted from being the location of the prefectural offices to a state of dereliction, and how urban space was thereafter transformed into three major districts. It also shows how the form of public urban space was organised, and suggests that the distinctiveness of a few types of buildings in the city was essentially associated with the city walls or wall-like structures, whereas the lack of discernible difference between the forms and styles of Chinese urban and rural buildings was determined by an absence of formal bond between building types and social institutions in the tradition of Chinese architecture. Finally, this part of the thesis describes the manners in which *fengshui* ideas operated in urban construction. It is argued that the application of *fengshui* to the city was characteristic of retrospective interpretation at urban level and was probably influential on the physical outcome of building activities at the level of local corporate groups; more complex and volatile situations are likely to have affected the construction projects that fell between these two levels. Some of these features of the city were particular to its own historic development, while others were directly or indirectly determined by, and at the same time, reflected, the factors characteristic of China's urban history in general, such as the nature and traditional Chinese concept of cities, the role of the imperial government, the symbolic meanings of the city walls, and the distinctive urban-rural relationship.

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Research for this thesis began under the guidance of my previous supervisor, the late Professor C.B. Wilson. Without his enthusiasm for Chinese culture and architecture, I probably would not have had the opportunity to be engaged in the study of China's urban history at the University of Edinburgh. The initial topic was an approach to urban development in comparative perspectives between China and Europe; its scope would have been limited by concentrating on a few case-studies based upon particular places in both cultural spheres. As the study gradually progressed, I came to the realisation that such an approach, if there were any validity in it at all, would not be viable unless more adequate knowledge about Chinese urban experience - vastly different from, and yet most insufficiently studied as compared to, that of the West - were first to be gained. With Professor Wilson's understanding and full support, I adjusted the orientation of the study to an inquiry into the urban transformation of the city of Suzhou as a specific case, from which, by occasional reference to the urban experience of Europe, a number of important features in an appropriate historical approach to the Chinese urban past can be developed.

My present supervisor, Dr. Angus J. MacDonald, Head of the Department of Architecture, most kindly took over the direction of my Ph.D. studies after the untimely death of Professor Wilson. It was an especially difficult task for him because this happened precisely at the time when the orientation of the research was being changed. Dr. MacDonald has shown unlimited patience during this transitional period. I acknowledge with sincere gratitude the great benefits that this manuscript has received from his invaluable criticism and advice on its methodology and argumentation. I would also like to thank him for his gracious readiness to assist in administrative matters, and, in particular, in applications for further extensions of my stay in the United Kingdom in order for me to finish my studies, which has proved to be one of the gravest and most distressing concerns of me and my family. Without Dr. MacDonald's direction and help, this thesis would not have been completed.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a study of the formation and transformation of the urban form and space of the city of Suzhou 蘇州.[1] The purpose of the study, however, is not to produce a comprehensive historiography of this city; instead, by taking Suzhou as a specific case, it aims at addressing a number of important characteristics of city building and development in pre-modern China, upon which an appropriate historical approach to studies of traditional Chinese cities can be based.

The choice of this particular city is determined by three major considerations. The first is a historical one. The city claims a past going back to 514 B.C. when it is recorded as having first been built as the capital of the state of Wu 吳. Its later development has been regarded as a physical continuation of this earliest construction. The point is not just that the city had a very early beginning, but that it is a physical entity that has existed by the early twentieth century continuously for nearly two and a half millennia - a long period that was characterised, among many other things, by the socio-political transition from the multitude of states contending against each other for survival to the unified imperial structure in the Qin 秦 (221-206 B.C.) and Han 漢 (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), by the medieval urban revolution from the second half of the eighth century to the Southern Song 宋 (1127-1279), and by the development of the market economy and of a matured hierarchical system of cities and market towns in the Ming 明 (1368-1644) and

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1 This thesis uses Pinyin 拼音 for romanising Chinese words throughout. Corresponding ideographs are printed right after their Pinyin when they first appear in the text, and when the same words reappear later after a considerable length of text. In the context of imperial China's urban history, by "city" I mean throughout the whole thesis any walled urban nucleus having functioned as a regional or local centre of imperial adminstration. A local, economic centre that did not overtly have this administrative function is accordingly called a "market town." The name of a city in imperial China was usually identical to the name of an administrative unit-region, whether it was a prefecture or a county, which was largely rural, in which the city was situated and over which the city-based local government ruled. The name of Suzhou, for instance, designated the prefectural city as well as the prefecture. I therefore explicitly make a distinction between the two meanings whenever I use this name, except for the cases in which what is referred to is quite obvious to the reader. Suzhou acquired many other names at different historic periods. To avoid confusion, I make a point of using "Suzhou" to refer to the city and the prefecture in the imperial era, because, having been the official appellation during the entire Ming and Qing periods, and presently being the name for the modern city, it is the most current one. Other names are mentioned wherever it seems historically appropriate.

Qing 清 (1644-1911). In this sense, this city itself, in the course of its rise and decline, can be treated as an object as well as a witness of this important period of China's complex urban history.

The second consideration is associated with the place of the city of Suzhou in the pre-modern Chinese world. In theoretical terms, the record of its earliest construction was so important to the tradition of Chinese city building that, as an example of a distinctive experience, the city figures in all the encyclopaedic works of the imperial era. In practical terms, although the city was not an imperial capital of China, it was the hub of a large region upon which the economic and cultural flourishing of the whole Chinese empire had increasingly depended to a phenomenal extent from as early as the A.D. ninth century onwards. Thus, the transformation of the city in history was not an isolated case that happened to be in the Chinese urban context, but often represented a leading force in the development of an urban China.

The third consideration regards the availability of appropriate materials for the study. Despite the paucity of archaeological findings, the written information about the earliest construction of the city and the mode of symbolism in its form, mainly coming from Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220) texts, appears to be richer than that of many of its contemporaries. Sources for the study of its urban development in the imperial era (221 B.C.-A.D. 1911), and from the ninth century onwards in particular, are abundant, ranging from documents and city maps to paintings. There is little doubt that Suzhou was one of the regions in traditional China which have produced and kept a remarkably large collection of records of their histories, customs and, of course, cities.

At the inception of the study, however, a basic question has first to be answered: Is its topic worth the effort? To put this question more overtly, are studies of China's cities and of its urban history important? The necessity for studies of China's urban past and present has zealously been proclaimed by Rhoads Murphy (1984) who sees the city as both a convenient and a revealing key to culture, "the clearest, most concentrated, most significant imprint which a culture produces on the geographical landscape, and on the diverse record of the human experience as a whole." (Op.cit. 186) Compared to cities of other cultures, Murphy argues that the Chinese case is a special one only in that it has the longest and largest continuous history of cities produced by a culture which remained within a context of political-administrative continuity for well over two millennia, this

two-thousand-year experience being built on a period of about the same length preceding it, during which cities, of a somewhat different but related character, arose and evolved. He then writes:

> Given China's immense size, in both area and population, and the great age of its civilisation, there have probably been more cities and more city dwellers in China than in all of the rest of human experience.[2] . . . Until some two or three centuries ago (only a brief interval in Chinese history), the level of economic, commercial, administrative, and technical development in China was higher than anywhere else in the world; this was accompanied and manifested by a larger number of cities, many of them bigger than any in the West until the recent advent of industrialisation. Sian, Kaifeng, Hangchow, Nanking, and Peking have each in their time been the largest city in the world, with populations of about a million a thousand or more years ago, larger still in more recent centuries. (Op.cit. 187)

The purpose of Murphy's uttering these statements is not to eulogise the past achievements of the Chinese, but to point to the fact that China's urban experience, like the civilisation of which it was and is an expression, is not a curious piece of "exoticism" which can be viewed as unimportant or irrelevant for the rest of "normal" mankind.

Murphy then criticises two other problematic tendencies in the treatment of Chinese experience by Western scholarship, namely to construct "systems" or theories on the basis of the Western experience in explaining the Chinese sphere and other parts of the world, and to generalise about Asia from Middle Eastern or other limited particularistic samples. The words of Murphy's criticism may sound harsh, but his point is especially important: the centrality, the relevance, the normative credentials of the Chinese experience, because of its immense scale as by far the largest single chunk of the human experience (including its urban component), as

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2 F.W. Mote, (1973:37) basing himself on Gilbert Rozman's *Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), makes a more cautious, yet still impressive, estimate:

> From the time neolithic man invented cities until 1800, about forty per cent of all the humans who ever lived in those were Chinese. That is to say, almost one-half of all mankind's accumulated urban experience in traditional societies is that accumulated by the Chinese who, fortunately, have kept some remarkable records of that experience. The other half, or slightly more, of the human experience with cities has been divided up among all the other living and dead civilisations which have ever known cities.

Murphy (op.cit. 187, 203 note 2) also offers an interesting comparison, i.e. even in 1980, despite a relatively low level of urbanisation as compared with industrial countries, there is a larger total of urban population in China than in the United States.

well as because of its general level of sophistication, should be accepted as axiomatic. This argument in fact echoes the one made a decade earlier by Mote (1973:36-7), who stresses that China's urban history is more than just *different* from that of the West:

> No matter how pervasively influential the Western experience seems to have become in recent centuries, historically speaking the Western models have not been typical of man's experience. Nor is it certain that the rest of the world, especially China, will travel the same path as that we have come along in urban development, even should it acquire the means to do so. Historically speaking, it is the Chinese experience with cities, and not our own, which has to be recognised as the largest, the longest, and the earliest to reach certain advanced - but pre-industrial - levels of development. . . . Generalisations about urbanism would be scientifically deficient if not cognisant of *any* [sic] relevant information whatsoever, even if minute and eccentric. Such generalisations become, practically speaking, all the more deficient when they are formulated without considering so vast a body of material as Chinese history offers us.

The importance of studies of Chinese urban history therefore lies not only in its distinctiveness from that of the West, but in the fact that the range and variety of Chinese experience in building, adjusting, governing and inhabiting cities, as well as in relating cities to the rest of society, is by far the largest block of human urban experience.

To illustrate this, an obvious, and revealing, example can briefly be cited here. One standard view of pre-industrial European cities is that they usually possessed separate legal and political status as organised entities, which set them apart from the countryside. In the introduction to his masterly survey of a thousand years of urban architecture in Western Europe, Wolfgang Braunfels (1988:1) has gone so far as to argue that the reasons for the urban failure and disorder in the modern era, for which architects and urban designers have partly been responsible, must be sought in changes in the general political function of cities.

> Cities no longer form unities but serve both the interests of the individual and those of the state with its manifold business, the new "one world." They represent only to the most limited extent an independent body corporate, for their areas of existence are interwoven in different ways, with the states to which they are subordinated and with the rural areas that surround them.

Interestingly, no Chinese city in the imperial era was ever a corporate entity of its own; nor did it have any of the organisational features which set European cities

apart in legal and political ways. It was an instrument of the imperial government, and thus an integral part of the "one world;" its area of existence was more than interwoven with the state to which it was subordinated and with the rural areas that surrounded it. Yet one can hardly deny that such a city captured "the imagination with its order" as much as any pre-industrial European city is believed by Braunfels (ibid.) to have done. Paradoxically, it is the cities of modern China that have evinced a kind of urban-rural dichotomy, and at the same time show marked disorder in urban architecture. Whether the reasons for the modern failure on both sides of the world lie more in the process of rapid change itself than in the direction of change falls beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that Chinese urban history deserves much more attention than it is presently given in the academic field of architecture.[3]

The progress of Chinese studies, especially in the realms of history, politics, religion, socio-economics, literature, etc., is phenomenal in Western countries from the second half of this century onwards. Yet although works on urban development in traditional China have also markedly increased in the past few decades,[4] there seem to exist at least two biases apparent in them. One appears to be either the sociological interest, over-riding careful examinations of the formation

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3 The paucity of the knowledge of China's urban history, and the insufficient awareness of its importance to the studies of the urban history of the world, are partly reflected, for instance, in the place of the description of Chinese cities in A.E.J. Morris' *History of Urban Form: Before the Industrial Revolutions*. The emphasis of this work is understandably laid on European urban history, and to a lesser degree, on the development of cities in the United States. Its first edition of 1972 is a text of 258 pages (including Appendices), whereas descriptions of a few Chinese cases, based entirely on the works of Andrew Boyd (1962) and Nelson I. Wu (1968), are only given two pages in one of the Appendices. The book has continuously been enlarged in the second and third editions of it (1979, 305 pages; 1994, 413 pages), but its part on the Chinese cities remains basically the same in length, postion and source of reference. In terms of the entire urban history of the world, the proportion of attention given to the Chinese experience seems regrettable.

4 Achievements of Western scholarship before the mid-1970s in studies of the building and development of individual Chinese cities, and of the history of city building in general, include both a few monographic works and descriptions or discussions as part of a certain larger topic, such as Chinese history, civilsation and architecture. They are represented, to name a few, by Sirén (1924), Trewartha (1952), Murphy (1954), Chang (1961, 1963), Wright (1965) and Wheatley (1971, 1975) in the former group, and by Granet (1930:49-74), Boyd (1962:237-46), Balazs (1964:66-78), Loewe (1966:221-46), Eberhard (1967:43-64), Needham (1971:71-9) and Elvin (1973:175-8) in the latter. Marked progress has however been made since the publication of the pioneering conference volumes edited by G. William Skinner and Mark Elvin (1974, 1977). From then on, more works, either of the general history of capital city planning or of case studies have been produced. Apart from the particularly specialised studies of politics, women, labour, business, and so on, a very brief list of them would include Murphy (1984), Steinhardt (1983, 1986, 1990), Meyer (1987, 1991) and Johnson (1993).

and transformation of the spatial and physical features of the cities, or the over-emphasis of the cities' formal and technological aspects, detached from their social contexts. Can urban phenomena be sufficiently explained solely in either social or formal terms? On this issue, Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson's (1984) work throws important light. Any architectural structure, they argue, "is an object whose spatial form is a form of social ordering." (Op.cit. 9) The social and the spatial cannot be treated as distinct, separate entities, because human societies are spatial phenomena:

> Through its ordering of space the man-made physical world is already a social behaviour. It constitutes (not merely represents) a form of order in itself: one which is created for social purposes, whether by design or accumulatively, and through which society is both constrained and recognisable. (Ibid.)

Thus not only does society have a certain spatial logic, but space has a certain social logic to it. (Op.cit. 22) If this line of argument is valid, to understand and to talk sensibly about cities should therefore employ a two-way approach: to study the social contexts which create and order the spatial and formal elements into patterns as a part of society, *and* to study the spatial and formal features which not only reflect the social phenomena but themselves are characters of social ordering.

The other bias is that attention is more often paid to the imperial capitals than to local cities. One of the most noticeable deficiencies in this scholastic imbalance is that the imperial capitals, important as they are to our understanding of the history of Chinese city planning, do not constitute the whole picture of China's urban experience. There are two basic reasons for this understanding. The first is the plain fact that the vast majority of urban centres in the pre-modern era were not imperial capitals. The second reason lies in the realisation that, as I will develop later in Chapter Three, the idea of building the imperial capitals, especially in its cosmological aspects, is profoundly to be differentiated from that of building, maintaining and governing local cities.

These two biases are directly reflected in the extremely limited publication of modern monographs on the city of Suzhou as an architectural object. Few would doubt that this city was one of the most important urban centres in pre-modern China. Yet to my knowledge, there are very few works of this kind published in English. Among them two are representative. The early one is an essay by Mote, (1973) based on a lecture delivered at Rice University, 11 October 1972. After

alluding to Houston in the context of urbanisation in contemporary societies, the essay focuses on urbanism in China, and on Suzhou. Some of the elements of the physical form and physical components of the city, concepts of historic time, and concepts affecting the uses of spaces, are discussed as factors in the urban history of Suzhou, and further of the Chinese people. The second work, also an article, was written by R. Stewart Johnston. (1983) On the basis of the 1229 city map, and by frequent reference to Yu Shengfang's (1980) work, Johnston has tried to make a series of interpretations of the space and structure of the city in the Southern Song period. Yet the validity of many of his interpretations seems very questionable, apparently due to the author's misunderstanding of the historic and cultural context of China in the second half of the imperial era. Among a few other works (e.g. Polachek 1975; Marmé 1993; Santangelo 1993; Ko 1994) that are basically socio-economically or sociologically oriented, only Michael Marmé's essay appears to relate closely to the physical city. The author, drawing both on economic and demographic data and on some local historic documents, gives a general overview of the city's expansion from the beginning of the Southern Song to the second half of the Ming.

The outcome of most of the inquiries into the history of the city of Suzhou by modern Chinese scholars clusters around the 1980s and early 1990s. Liao Zhihao and Ye Wanzhong's (1984) paper, offering some very basic information about the city, is included in a small, two-volume book introducing the history of a few famous cities in China. It is part of a mini-series on Chinese history, its intended readers being the general public. The monographic volume by Cao Zifang and Wu Naifu, (1986) despite being more comprehensive and more detailed, does not seem to exceed in quality Liao and Ye's paper. Some improvements in scholarship are found in an architecturally oriented essay written by Yu Shengfang, (1980) dealing with the planning principles of the city in the Southern Song on the basis of the 1229 map. From the late 1980s onwards, a slightly larger amount of scholarly works has emerged, but emphasis is laid more on two particular periods of the city's history, namely the late sixth century B.C. and the thirteenth century A.D., than on others. This is first exemplified by a collection of discourses, edited by an academic society known as Jiangsusheng Wu Wenhua Yanjiuhui 江蘇省吳文化研究會 (JWWY 1988) on the history of the city focusing on various topics, such as archaeology, early social, economic and cultural development of the region, and its urban construction. Among the papers in this collection, the one by Ji Yuyi (op.cit. 33-53) stands out as probably the first in Chinese that, in its interpretation of the

earliest construction of the city in the late sixth century B.C., tries to analyse critically some of the Eastern Han texts that had seldom been challenged. Ji's encouraging approach is then followed by Qu Yingjie's (1991:208-25) somewhat provocative study of the city of that same historic period. The picture map of the city engraved on stone in 1229 is undoubtedly one of the most important pieces of evidence of the urban form and space of Suzhou in the Southern Song period. A discussion of the authenticity and date of the map, and a close examination of its scale and content are presented by Wang Qianjin (1990) from a cartographic point of view.

As far as the present research is concerned, the deficiency of modern scholarship, both in quantity and in quality, with regard to the history of the building and development of the city of Suzhou is aggravated by the paucity of archaeological findings. In this situation, I have to rely heavily on comparative examination of the original materials of principally three types, namely texts, city maps and paintings which were produced in the pre-modern era, and occasionally by reference to the form, space and surviving urban components of the present city. The earliest texts about the city are from the Eastern Han documents, the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu* in particular, which claim to account for the history of its building in the late six century B.C. From then on, apart from the *Wudu Fu*, a rhymed prose-poem by Zuo Si 左思 (*c.* A.D. 250-305), in which a couple of stanzas are a eulogistic description of the city in the author's time, few materials are available to us until the second half of the Tang 唐 dynasty (A.D. 618-907). Suzhou in the ninth century starts to be better known to us, not only because some valuable accounts of the city are contained in a number of Tang poems, but, more importantly, because of the appearance of the earliest extant local gazetteer of the Suzhou area, the *Wudi Ji*. It was however from the Song dynasty (960-1279), especially from the Southern Song period, onwards, that materials of various kinds proliferated. The local gazetteers compiled in this and every succeeding dynastic period are more comprehensive and more detailed; casual notes or records (*biji* 筆記) by individual scholars are numerous. The appearance of the first city map carved on stone in 1229 was followed by the production of a dozen more in subsequent history. The visual image of the city in the eighteenth century is provided by some picture scrolls depicting the urban spatial arrangement, buildings and people's activities in them. It is on the basis of these materials that the history of this city is examined.

As has been stated at the very beginning of this introduction, the present study, treating the city of Suzhou as a particular case, attempts a sketching of a few important features of an approach to urban history appropriate to traditional Chinese cities. This does not imply that the thesis claims to provide an ideal construct to explain the varied and complex history of urban China. In fact, it has been realised by most sinologists that simple, undifferentiated models of "the Chinese city" are untenable. (See, e.g., Samuels 1978:713-4; Rowe 1993:1) An epistemological question then arises: how can some general conclusions about the history of Chinese urban construction and development as a whole be drawn from the study of this single city? It is our understanding that, for all the various historical reasons, Chinese culture has been characterised for the last two millennia by both its extreme diversity and its high integration. Its cities were products of this complex culture. Thus, two important and interrelated ideas come to inform this methodological issue. First, whereas the histories of these cities were profoundly differentiated from each other in space and time, common features must have existed in them so that they were culturally Chinese. It should be valid, then, to treat the city of Suzhou axiomatically as *a* Chinese city in the sense that, with all the unique factors in its own history, it was firmly embedded in the urban context of pre-modern China.

The second idea is that the city of Suzhou, like any other Chinese city, was given form not only by the practices and ideas that derived from its particular social, economic, and political circumstances, but also by a set of changing values and beliefs that were an integral part of a widely shared world view of the traditional Chinese as a whole - a characteristic way of both looking at and shaping the world. It is for the purpose of this study that the pragmatic examination of the city in its various historic contexts is frequently accompanied by an inquiry into the conceptual realms of the Chinese. Consequently, how the city in all its varied, specific aspects was perceived by the Chinese in history is taken as no less important than what the city really looked like. The common features in China's urban history are therefore found mainly in the areas of attitudes, principles and symbolic functions, whereas this particular city was surely differentiated to various degrees from other Chinese cities in form, in spatial disposition of urban components, in specific historic events, in its political and economic significance, and so forth.

The study begins, in Chapter One, with an introduction of the historic

background against which the city of Suzhou rose and declined. This descriptive chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I introduce the general geographic, cultural and socio-political conditions under which the city is recorded to have been built for the first time in 514 B.C. as the capital of the state of Wu situated on the fringe of by then the nominal Zhou 周 (*c.* 1040-256 B.C.) hegemony, and eventually to have fallen in 473 B.C. when Wu was destroyed by its chief enemy, the neighbouring state of Yue 越. In the second section, I offer an overview of the development of the city and the prefecture of which it was an administrative centre in the imperial era. Since important growth of the city did not start until the mid-Tang, and since our sources are very few prior to that period, the cursory description of its economic growth, population, cultural transformation, and the urban features observed by Chinese and foreign visitors is concentrated on the second half of the imperial era, from the eighth century onwards. This chapter provides the reader with a general sketch of the city in history. More detailed discussions of its development will then be fleshed out in the chapters that follow.

The main body of the thesis, however, is composed of three parts. The first, constituted by Chapter Two, focuses on a history of the earliest construction of the city of Suzhou in the late sixth century B.C., when it was known as Helü Dacheng 闔閭大城 (lit. "the great walled city of Helü), and on the perceived cosmological symbolism of its form. This chapter does not present a historical study as much as one of formulating the conception of this city and its symbolism which had accumulated and was fairly systematised by the Eastern Han period. This methodological orientation is determined by two salient features in the sources that are presently available to the study. First, we understand that the only material which can be regarded as of primary relevance for the study of urbanism in a particular period that was remote from ours is properly attested archaeological evidence, while the transmitted texts must be considered as of secondary importance. Yet, to date, archaeological discoveries pertaining to the building of Helü Dacheng are scarce in the extreme. Second, the main texts from which the information about this early city is extracted are from the Eastern Han dynasty, more than half a millennium that is after the event of its building. Serious problems would then be latent in a historical approach to it, such as how later accounts can be used to re-construct the form of the city, and how the particular way in which the city form was symbolically perceived at the time of its building can be identified. Because of these two problems in our sources of study, the subject of this chapter is what was perceived in a systematised written version of the building of the city by

the authors of the Eastern Han documents, and not what it was in physical reality.

The building of the city in the late sixth century B.C. is not to be seen as an isolated event of the state of Wu, but as one which took place in the contemporary socio-political context of the whole of China; nor are the practice and ideas revealed in it to be severed from the traditions of city planning and construction which, by that time, had been evolved for nearly two thousand years. On the other hand, the later accounts of the event almost certainly reflected, consciously or unconsciously, not only the value system and moral judgement of the Han, but also the syncretised cosmology of city building of the time. It is for these reasons that, in this chapter, the examination of the form and symbolism of Helü Dacheng is preceded by a section on the ancient traditions of city building in central China, principally based on literary evidence. The section first makes a fleeting survey of the written records of city building in the Shang 商 (16th century-*c.* 1040 B.C.) and early Zhou, much of these elements of ancient urban experience having both continued and further been enriched by some important innovations in the Eastern Zhou (770-256 B.C.). Then it concentrates on the prescriptive components of city planning characteristic of the Han synthesis, into which a considerable body of lore, practices and ideas connected with city building accumulated by the end of the Warring States (481-221 B.C.) was incorporated. This synthesis is epitomised in the classical source of city theory, the *Zhou Li* and its last section in particular, the "Kaogong Ji 考工記."

The chapter then turns to its major concern - the history of the construction of Helü Dacheng and its cosmological symbolism as elaborated in Eastern Han texts. This history may be seen as a construct devised by the authors of these later documents to express the historical struggle for survival between the states of Wu and Yue. Whatever the authenticity of this history may prove to be, it later came to be viewed as a source of historical authority and continued to inform the city's further development in subsequent dynastic periods. Since the main purpose of this study is to identify a number of important features of urban transformation in pre-modern China, the emphasis of this chapter is laid on investigating *what* the significant aspects of this history are, rather than *how* it was devised, although a few suggestions are made on the possible origins of some of its elements.

The investigation is conducted under three topical headings, and is supplemented by brief discussion of the capital city of Yue in support of some of the major points. The first is the recorded physical construction of the city. This

includes an examination of why the building of it was seen as politically important, how the site for it was believed to have been chosen, what were its form and measurements, and how its principal structures was possibly disposed in space. The second topic concerns the cosmic scheme that is recorded to have been implemented in the building of the city, i.e. the city was regarded as a cosmic centre. Here I demonstrate how the building of the city was perceived as following the patterns of Heaven and Earth, and explain why the city walls and moats, two of the most prominent physical features of the city, could be interpreted as symbolising an establishment and maintenance of an ideal order in accord with the Order of the cosmos. The third topic, the symbolism of the city gates, is designed partly for the purpose of enhancing the argument built up under the second topic. It is shown, at the same time as demonstrating a couple of less important features of the gates in cosmological terms, how the idea of the city as a cosmic centre was made more explicit by the symbolic function of two particular gates.

The second part of the main body of the thesis is formed by Chapter Three. It functions as a theoretical link between the discussion of the city in connection with its earliest construction, and its development in the imperial era. The Qin unification in 221 B.C. is often taken as a turning point in Chinese history, as it was in this year that the first strongly centralised Chinese empire was brought into being. Along with the far-reaching social and political transformation at that time, there occurred a profound change in the nature of China's city system. China's urban history throughout the subsequent two-thousand-year imperial era was characterised both by its remarkable continuity and by its great complexity. The development of the city of Suzhou is to be regarded not only as an integral part, but also as a particular instance, of that history. Since there exist among sinologists a number of fundamental problems of dispute as to how the cities of imperial China and their development should be interpreted, it is necessary to delineate these problems and to clarify my views on them before proceeding to examine the city of Suzhou more closely.

To pursue this task in Chapter Three, I first consider some general attributes of the regional and local cities as centres of imperial administration, emphasising the variability of their form in space, and arguing that a fundamental distinction should be drawn between these cities and the imperial capital, particularly in their symbolic roles. Second, I deal with the overall evolution of urban planning and governing principles during the period of the medieval urban revolution and urban

development in the midst of the socio-economic change in the Ming and Qing periods. Third, I discuss some aspects of the distinctive urban-rural relationship in imperial China, and suggest that the role of the city walls in society was more of a symbolic than pragmatic one. Fourth, I attempt a preliminary explanation of the co-existence of the distinctive antithesis between the stability of form of the walled city in time and the urban expansion in space.

The third and final part of the thesis, concentrating on the major aspects of urban transformation of the city of Suzhou in the imperial era, is composed of the last four chapters. Examination of the development of the walls and gates of the city, in Chapter Four, is given pride of place because of their physical and symbolic significance as much in Suzhou's history as in the whole urban history of traditional China. In this chapter, I first describe the temporary transference of the city to a new site in A.D. 591 and its returning to the old one within a period of about thirty years. After analysing the major pragmatic reason for the resumption of the old site, i.e. the imbeddedness of the city in its natural surroundings where history had been deposited, I suggest a deeper implication of this event - the conceptual and possibly institutional inseparability of the walled city, with all of its basic elements (the city walls in particular), from its status as the regional or local administrative centre of the imperial government. Second, I review the history of the reconstruction of the city walls, and note a peculiar fact that, unlike previous ones, major reconstruction works during the Ming and Qing were characterised by their occurrence in the early years of the dynasty. I then moot an important, though as yet not fully answered, question: does this phenomenon indicate the more salient symbolic role of the city walls in the late imperial period? Third, by reference to the available written records, contemporary city maps, and the form and urban structure of the present city, I examine the length of the walls in each dynastic period, and argue that the overall position of the city walls and thus the general form of the city have remained basically unchanged from 1229, or probably even a few centuries earlier, throughout subsequent history, although, for many possible reasons, the traditional accounts of the length of the walls in different historic periods vary significantly. Fourth, I briefly sketch the physical structure and configuration of the walls on the basis of the pictorial evidence from the 1229 picture maps and the scroll paintings of the Qing. Finally, I discuss the transformation of the city gates. Emphasis is laid on their symbolic meanings, and, in particular, on their cosmological aspect as profoundly different from that in the earliest construction of the city.

Chapter Five focuses on the transformation of the overall urban structure of the city of Suzhou. Three prominent features are examined in this chapter. The first is the development of the network of city canals. After a brief review of the possible process of its formation by the year 1229, I demonstrate that this canal system functioned as a framework for the spatial organisation of city structures from the pre-Tang era to the end of the Southern Song. I also argue that the partial decay of the canal network and the unusually frequent efforts to maintain it by the local government in the first half of the Qing, reflect the enormous economic and demographic pressure on the existing water system. The second feature is the fortune of the geometrical centre of the city. By showing how it was demoted from being the location of the prefectural offices to a state of dereliction, and the tragedies ensuing upon an attempt at rebuilding the offices on this particular site in the early years of the Ming, I propose that this apparently unique event in Suzhou's history might have carried with it some significant implications that fell within the general socio-political context of urban experience in imperial China. Third, I illustrate the spatial characteristics of the partitioning of urban space into three main districts from the mid-Ming onwards. Special attention is then directed to the development of the city's west suburbs as a major outcome of the urban expansion in the late imperial period, which, in a modern sense, may be regarded as more "urban" than most areas enclosed by the city walls. Here I venture to explain why such an evident contradiction could have existed between the remarkable stability of the city form defined by the largely unaltered position of the city walls, and a process of steady urban growth in space in the last centuries of the imperial era.

In Chapter Six, I seek to solve two apparently simple, but actually complicated, issues. One concerns architectural forms and styles of buildings in the city in relation to those in rural areas. This issue is approached by unravelling the relationship between form and function, and by analysing the compositional traits of building complexes in the tradition of Chinese architecture. It is then suggested that, on the one hand, the lack of discernible difference between the forms and styles of Chinese urban and rural buildings was fundamentally determined by a characteristic absence of formal bond between building types and social institutions, and, on the other hand, the distinctiveness of a few types of urban structures was brought about by the formal attributes of the city walls or wall-like structures, not by the buildings incorporated in these structures. The other issue under extensive discussion in this chapter centres on the use of public urban space. It is shown how

the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan 玄妙觀, a renowned Daoist temple located in the city of Suzhou, was employed for such a public purpose in the late imperial period. An explanation of this mode of the use of public urban space is attempted in two directions: (1) the traditional Chinese concept of socialised space determined that any space of a considerable size facilitating social interactions in a man-made environment had to be defined both nominally and physically, the courtyard being the most appropriate space of this kind; and (2) the public nature of the temple, the spaciousness of its courtyard, and the psychologically and practically maintained accessibility of all sections of both urban and rural societies to it, made this particular use a convenient option.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I discuss the position of *fengshui* 風水 (Chinese geomantic) ideas in the history of the city of Suzhou. I consider this issue as important not only because *fengshui*, as a system of adapting the residences of the living and the dead to the natural environment, was supposed to be extensively applied to site-choosing, site-adjustment and building of tombs, houses, villages and many other kinds of structures in traditional China, but also because of an implicit (in some cases, even explicit) assumption currently held by many students of Chinese urban history and sociology that the building of traditional cities in China was often, if not always, influenced by *fengshui* ideas. This assumption may have derived from the reading of the expositions in *fengshui* manuals that its principles should ideally operate in man-made construction of all kinds, and right down the scale - from cities to individual buildings and tombs. In practice, however, evidence indicates that the assumption turns out to be very questionable as far as regional and local cities are concerned. Thus by analysing the relevant materials contained in a number of local documents on the history of the city of Suzhou and the development of its urban elements, this chapter aims at tentatively answering the following questions: to what extent and in what way were *fengshui* ideas applied to its urban construction and transformation? What physical and psychological effects could they have had upon the city? How significant may this aspect prove to be in studies of traditional urban China?

The chapter begins with a cursory examination of the problems concerning the origins of *fengshui* as a set of newly elaborated cosmological ideas and the principles of its two major schools from the Tang period onwards. Then I consider the one and only extant documented instance of active *fengshui* advice on the urban construction of the city of Suzhou, and discuss the social and historical implications of its

eventual failure. In the third section of this chapter, I deal with three cases of *fengshui* interpretations of the natural setting, form, and urban spatial pattern of the city. The question concerning the applicability of *fengshui* ideas to the physical construction of regional and local cities at an urban level is mooted in the fourth section. A tentative answer to this question is made on the basis of an analysis both of the collective ambiguous attitudes of the imperial scholar-officials towards *fengshui*, and of the particular social and ideological context of regional and local governments that were staffed by these scholar-officials and housed in these cities. In the fifth and final section, I extensively analyse *fengshui* involvement in a specific building project - the construction of a major bridge across the city moat, and suggest that the exertion of the influence of *fengshui* ideas on building activities in the city probably varied in intensity at different levels of the interests of socio-political groups

CHAPTER 1 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Boasting a history of over two and a half millennia, our city, Suzhou, is situated at the centre of the Yangzi 揚子 delta, in the south-east of present-day Jiangsu 江蘇 province. About seventy kilometres to the north, the River Yangzi flows eastward. About thirty-five kilometres to the south-west lies Lake Tai 太, the great drainage basin of the Southeast region, out of which flow innumerable streams north to the Yangzi or east to the sea. (Figure 1-1, cf. Figure 1-2) The region around Lake Tai has been the richest rice-growing bottom land in all of China; it is also a region of great scenic beauty, with mountains and hills and thousands of islands. It provided water routes connecting to all the important cities of the South-east, as well as to the Grand Canal and Yangzi arteries, and has thus been of great strategic importance to the defence of the region. With the aim of providing the reader with adequate background information for our discussion of the construction and transformation of the city, this chapter is divided into two sections: in the first, I introduce the general geographic, cultural and political conditions under which the city was built for the first time in 514 B.C.; this is followed by a brief description of the development of Suzhou in the imperial era, wherein our attention is directed mainly to the period from the ninth century to the turn of this century.

1.1 HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE CITY AT SUZHOU DURING THE SPRING AND AUTUMN PERIOD

1.1.1 Geographical Background

Tradition holds that the city of Suzhou was originally built in 514 B.C. as the capital of the state of Wu 吳.[5] It was then called Helü Dacheng 闔閭大城 (lit. "the great city of Helü"). In the first half of the Eastern Zhou 周 (770-256 B.C.), known as the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.), Wu occupied a territory spreading out from the Yangzi delta and, as Figure 1-2 shows, gradually extended in

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5 The Wu tribe (and later, state) possessed several other names, such as "Gouwu" 句吳, "Gongyu" 攻敔, and a few other homonyms. The most frequently used are the "Wu" and "Gouwu;" the character *gou* 句 was, according to Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645), a great exegete of the Tang, applied only as a transliteration by the aborigines, and had a similar phonetic function to the character *yu* 於 (or 于) of "Yuyue" 於越, another name of the Yue 越 tribe. (*Han Shu*, vol. 28B: "Dili Zhi," no. 8B with Yan's commentary. Cf. *Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 55: "Duke Ding 5th Year" with Du and Kong's commentaries)

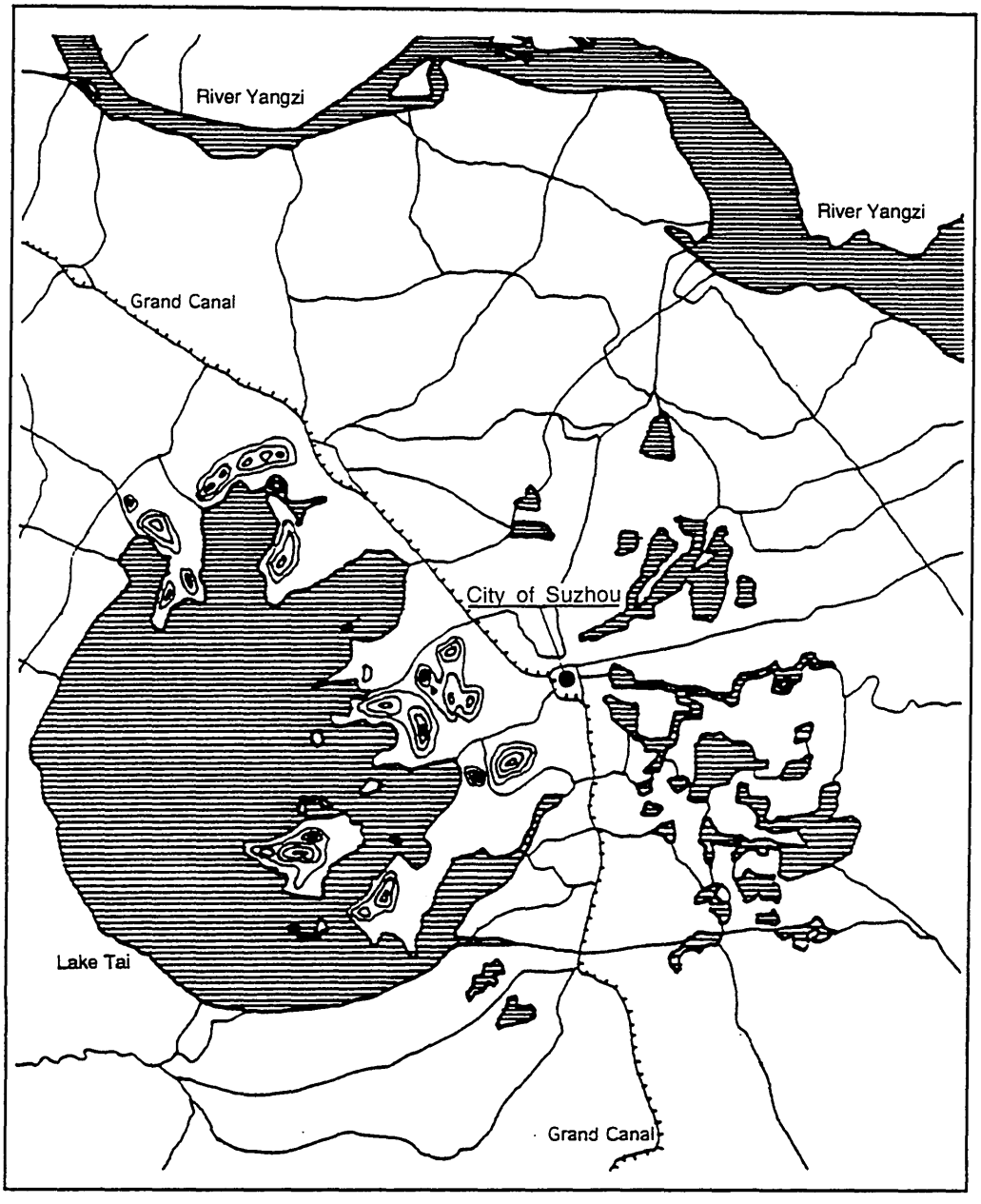

Figure 1-1 Present topographical features around the city of Suzhou. Redrawn from JC 1990:5-6, 48-9.

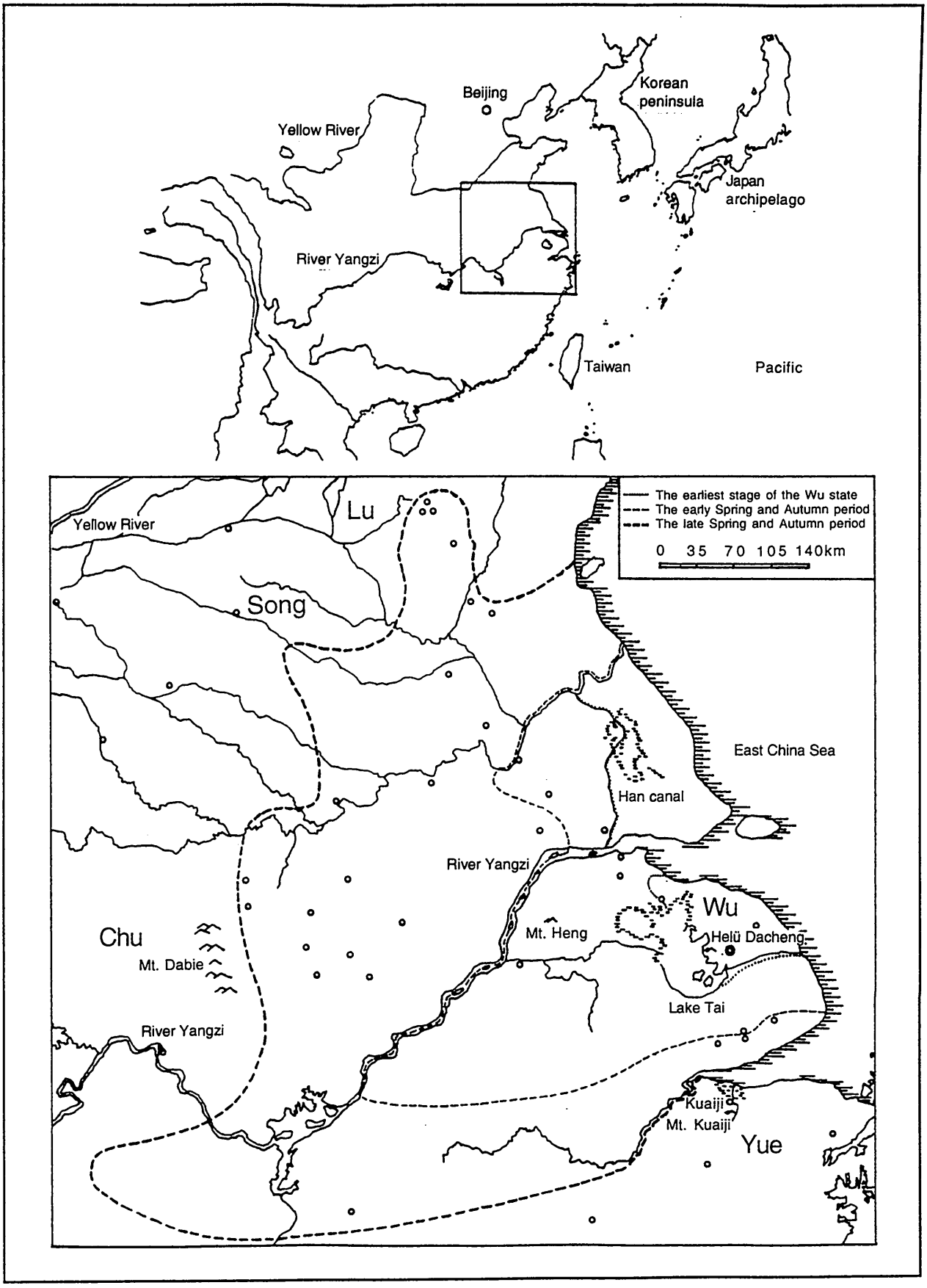

Figure 1-2 Geographical locations of the state of Wu at three historical stages in relation to its neighbouring states. Helü Dacheng was the capital city of Wu from 514 to 473 B.C. Redrawn from Wei 1988:122, by reference to Cao and Wu 1986:27, Guo 1979:15-6, and Tan 1982:vol.1:20-1, 29-30.

almost all directions except for the eastern sea-ward one. From the strategic point of view, the central area in which the city was built had the advantage of being protected by the River Yangzi at its back to the north, extending south-west to the shore of Lake Tai, and controlling the sea to the east by reaching across the Yangzi-mouth. This advantage was summarised by an early Qing geographer, Gu Zuyu 顧祖禹 (1624-1680):

> From Wu [i.e. Suzhou] prefecture northward across the River Yangzi, Huainan 淮南 [present-day Yangzhou 楊州] could be annexed; southward by sea, Ming 明 [present-day Ningbo 寧波] and Yue 越 [present-day Shaoxing 紹興] could be taken over; upstream along the River Yangzi, Sheng 昇 [present-day Changzhou 常州] and Run 潤 [present-day Zhenjiang 鎮江] could be possessed; further across the sea, Tiao 苕 [present-day Wuxing 吳興] and Zhe 浙 [present-day Hangzhou 杭州] could be reached. In the matter of all-under-Heaven, how can Wu prefecture not be considered as a place of priority! (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Xingshi")

On the other hand, the vast delta plain, with the hilly land to its west periphery and the coastal islands to its east end, is, in contrast to Central China, characterised by its myriad waters and lakes, fertile soils, rich natural resources, and a genial climate. Whereas, from the agricultural point of view, this natural geographic environment obviously had many advantages, adequate water conservancy projects and the extension of the cultivated land would seem to have been indispensable so as to curb potential disturbances by seasonal floods, and such projects are recorded to have been carried out in Zhou times on a considerable scale. (Cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2: "Waizhuan Ji Wudi Zhuan") From the evidence revealed by archaeological excavations and in literary records, it is certain that the main contemporary agrarian produce of this region included rice, and flax, kudzu vine and mulberry leaves providing raw materials for textile manufacture. Fishing and stock raising were also prominent activities for providing daily necessities. Rich bronze and tin resources yielded abundant supplies to tools and arms foundries. (Chen et al. 1988:91-5)

1.1.2 Cultural and Ethnical Background

The origin of the Wu tribe is not very clear, but we may surmise that, as Granet (1930:31) has suggested, it was formed by tattooed people with short hair.[6]

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6 According to the traditionally received account of ancient Chinese history, the head of the Zhou tribe, Gugong Danfu 古公亶父 (lit. "the old duke Danfu"), brought up three sons; the eldest was Taibo 太伯, the second Zhongyong 仲雍, and the youngest Jili 季歷. Danfu

Wu culture may have originated in the Ningzhen 寧鎮 area (around present Nanjing 南京 and Zhenjiang 鎮江), where the Neolithic period seems to be represented by a phase of development known as the Bei Yinyangying 北陰陽營 and characteristic of patriarchal tribe society, when the practice of bronze metallurgy may have begun. (Chang 1986:395; Zhou 1988:237) Large amounts of archaeological evidence, including the remains of relatively permanent settlements and cemeteries, tools, ornaments, spindle whorls, pottery, etc., have been found to support such a hypothesis. A successor to the North Yinyangying phase, the Hushu 湖熟 Culture, named after the type site at Hushu, shared the source of Wu culture with the Maqiao 馬橋 phase in the area around Lake Tai, which developed directly from the Liangzhu 良渚 phase. The early period of the Hushu stage was approximately at the time of transition from the Shang 商 (*c.* 16th-11th centuries B.C.) to the Zhou, while its later period was at the time of the Spring and Autumn period when the Wu culture had become fairly developed. (Zhou 1988:237-41; Lin 1988:251-4)

Although mutual influences between these semi-barbarian chiefdoms and Central China from as early as the Shang period on are evidenced in both ancient literature and archaeological discoveries, (Chang 1986:396; Lin 1988:257; Chen et al. 1988:305-7) and although the House of Wu is supposed to have issued from the same ancestors as the royal house of the Zhou, Wu culture did retain its separate identity and developed in its own way. When Taibo 太伯, the eldest son of Gugong Danfu[7] came with his brother Zhongyong 仲雍 to the Wu area in the late Shang, and later, as the earliest immigrant of the Zhou, became the first chieftain of the tribe, they had to adapt themselves to aboriginal customs. (*Shi Ji*, vol. 31; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1) Therefore, it seems possible that, as suggested by Wheatley (1971:171) when he refers to all the territories directly or indirectly controlled by the Zhou, neither was the aboriginal culture replaced by the Zhou, nor can the basic establishments of its settlements be regarded as having been created *de novo*

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had the intention of passing on his position to Jili whose son, Chang 昌, later King Wen 文, was born with cosmically auspicious signs (*shengrui* 聖瑞). Taibo, therefore, abdicating his claims by primogeniture, came with Zhongyong to the Wu area (*Jingman* 荊蠻), and both had their hair cut and bodies tattooed and wore dress identical to that of the aborigines, in order to signify that they had become alien to the Zhou culture and could thus no longer inherit the Zhou title. The aborigines admired Taibo's righteousness and supported him as the chieftain of the tribe named Gouwu, with over one thousand households of followers. (Cf. *Shi Ji*, vol. 31: "Wu Taibo Shijia;" *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1: "Wu Taibo Zhuan." See also Creel 1970:122 note 80)

7 Who gave the Zhou a political identity and was thus posthumously granted the title of Zhou Taiwang 周太王 (literally translatable as "the Zhou's earliest and greatest king" or "the Zhou's patriarch king").

by the Zhou aristocrats. It is only possible that at the time when King Wu 武 of Zhou, as recorded with emphasis in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, posthumously enfeoffed Taibo in Wu, he had already long been supported and chosen by the aborigines as head of the tribe. (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1). The enfeoffment was actually a part of the Zhou's policy of placing most settlements of any size under a Zhou chieftain or a Zhou adherent so that the Zhou themselves could concentrate on maintaining direct control of their homeland in the Wei 渭 valley. (Wheatley 1971:112, 162-4; Zhang 1984:14)

The closest affinity of Wu culture was rather with that of Yue 越 in the south which shares a border with Wu, and to a degree with that of Chu 楚 in the west. They were all three of them parts of the Baiyue 百越[8] (lit. "Hundred Yue peoples") who were spread over a vast area of southern China, and apart from the same geographical and climatic conditions, they shared direct communications, similar customs and possibly a common language.[9] It would be impossible to deal with all aspects of Wu's distinctive cultural development not only because of the paucity of evidence which impedes detailed speculation, but also because of the great extent of the area, which would inevitably take us well beyond the scope of the current topic. Thus I shall devote only a few lines to the characteristic use of animal themes by the people of Wu in their social activities, which directly concerns the topic of our discussion in the following chapter.

The peoples of Wu and Yue, and those further south, whom the Chinese of the Central Plain pejoratively called "southern barbarians" (*nanman* 南蠻) as in contrast to themselves, the "civilised men" *(ren* 人), were regarded by the latter as progenies of the snake.[10] This designation of the *nanman* as the descendants of snakes was for the Han Chinese a matter of what Geertz (1973:353) calls

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8 "Baiyue", also known as "Yue", is a general name for the myriad ancient tribes spread across the region to the south of the middle and lower River Yangzi. It was not until the Qin 秦 and Han 漢 dynasties that some of these tribes gradually merged with the Han people. The rest of them preserved their original close relationship with the present Zhuang 壯, Li 黎 and Dai 傣 ethnic minorities.

9 Cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 6: "Waizhuan Ji Cekao," vol. 7: "Waizhuan Ji Fanbo;" *Lüshi Chunqiu*, vol. 23: "Zhihua" Section; *Han Shu*, vol. 28B: "Dili Zhi," no. 8B. This is in fact most overtly signified by the character *man* 蠻, its lower part, *hui* 虫, being the original form of *hui* 虺, meaning "poisonous snake."

10 *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 13A; *Taiping Yulan*, vol. 170: "Zhoujun," Section no. 16: "Fu Zhou." By the same token, the people in the north were called *di* 狄, "progenies of the dog;" the people in the east were called *he* 貉, "progenies of the cat family;" the people in the west were called *qiang* 羌, "progenies of the goat;" etc. (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chaps. 4A, 9B and 10A)

"shuffling discrete (and concrete) images . . . so as to produce symbolic structures capable of formulating and communicating objective (which is not to say accurate) analyses of the social and physical worlds." It differentiated, in an explicit, metaphorical way, the barbarians from the Han Chinese in Central China. Such a differentiation was, however, obviously not made on equal terms. Thierry (1989:78) correctly points out that the basis of the difference between the Han Chinese and the Barbarians was not originally of an ethnic nature, but rested on a relationship to Civilisation, since for the Chinese there was Civilisation and the Void. So in this case, as in many other analogous ones, "the graphic classification of the name of each type of Barbarian under a radical marking his animal nature is an ontological necessity;" (ibid.) and "this denial of the humanity of others evolved over the centuries, but it underlay the relations that the Chinese formed with their neighbours." (Op.cit. 79)

Yet it is more important for us to note that this designation may have derived from the extensive application of the snake to supernatural accounts, architectural decorative themes and the general tattoo pattern in these areas, as recorded in many writings. The most prominent and interesting records concerning the snake are those which give an interpretation of the snake-pattern tattoo: since people in the South frequently conducted their livelihood activities in the water, either to grow rice or to go fishing, they were commonly tattooed with such patterns as small dragons (*longzi* 龍子) or as a snakelike creature with scales so as to avoid harm from aquatic beings including water snakes or sea-snakes.[11] As we will see later when we discuss the symbolism in the building of the Wu capital city, these snakelike themes were intensively employed in the constructions and decorations of significant urban features, and thus characteristically integrated in the application of cosmological motifs.

1.1.3 Political and Economic Background

The first known written record of direct influence from Central China on Wu's political and economic development is the one that describes the immigration of

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11 Cf. *Shuo Yuan*: "Feng Shi;" *Han Shu*, vol. 28B: "Dili Zhi," no. 8B; *Huainan Zi*, vol. 1: "Yuandao Xun."The dragon mentioned in the documents relating to the customs of the Wu and Yue regions at that time may not be regarded as having the same implications as the dragon used in the culture of Central China or Chu 楚 culture. If in later times of the Spring and Autumn period the theme of dragon of the Han type became prevalent in the South, it may have resulted from influence from the North or the West.

Taibo and Zhongyong to this peripheral area. One may be inclined to speculate that Taibo and Zhongyong, said to have been adept in farming,[12] passed on their experience of advanced cultivation, irrigation, poultry and livestock raising, and of bronze foundry, to the aborigines. Whereas there is little literary information or hard archaeological evidence to confirm such a speculation, except a few references appearing in some documents of much later periods, such as an old stone-slab inscription quoted in a local gazetteer during the late Qing 清, referring to some water conservancy projects led by Taibo,[13] it seems reasonable to suggest that at the end of the Shang, Central China was much more developed in most material ways than its peripheral areas.[14] It is therefore very possible that Taibo and Zhongyong did pass on their various productive experiences to the Wu locals, consequently leading to "an initial period of prosperity several years after [Taibo immigrated to Wu]". (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1)

This happened, as I have mentioned earlier, in the period approaching the end of the Shang 商 around the eleventh century B.C., when the princes, dukes and other tribes were at war with each other in Central China. In order to protect the tribesmen from the vortex of wars, as the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 1) records, "Taibo constructed a *cheng* 城 [lit. "city wall"] measuring three *li* and two hundred *bu* [approx. 1.6 km at the Eastern Han standard] in perimeter, and a *guo* 郭 [lit. "outer city wall"] with a perimeter of over three hundred *li* [approx. 126.9 km]. [This settlement] is located in the north-west corner [of the Wu area], being named Gouwu. All the people inside it cultivated land there." This can hardly be regarded as a city even in the most primitive sense of that term; rather, the area within the *cheng* would have been a walled garrison, and the area within the *guo* a palisaded territory occupied by the tribe. Nevertheless, this tiny tribe probably became the

12 The title of "the Master of Farming" (*nongshi* 農師) was said to have been conferred upon Houji 後稷 who was the first ancestor of the Zhou tribe by Yao 堯, the legendary leader of the united patriarchal clans before the Xia 夏 dynasty. Cf. *Shang Shu*, vol. 2: "Yao Dian;" *Shi Jing*, vol. 17-1 "Da Ya": "Shengmin" and vol. 17-3 "Da Ya": "Gong Liu;" *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1.

13 *Taibo Mubei Ji* (Record of Events Inscribed on Taibo's Tombstone), by Mi Bao 糜豹, contained in the *Meili Zhi* 梅里志 (Gazetteer of Meili) compiled during the Daoguang 道光 reign-period (1821-1850).

14 Creel (1970:224-5 note 118, 361 note 159) casts some doubts on whether the Zhou in Taibo's time were any more advanced in culture than the people of the Wu area. Chang Kwang-chi, (1986:398-9) however, basing himself on archaeological findings, suggests that "the rise of some of the Western Zhou civilisations in the Lower Yangtse Valley may have been brought about by an elite class who established there a local technological and societal pattern after the North China model." He sees the story of Taibo and Zhongyong in its broad outline and the archaeological facts as having jointly established the process of acculturation in this region by the Western Zhou civilisation.

most advanced in the Lower Yangzi area, and laid a foundation for its further development.

In 770 B.C., barbarian invasion drove the royal court of Zhou eastward and its hegemony was crumbling. The fiefs emerged as *de facto* independent states and the historical stage known as the Spring and Autumn period started. From that time, the Wu and Yue tribes were probably in some degree of subjection to Chu in the west,[15] (Creel 1970:224; Chen *et al.* 1988:169) until 585 B.C. when Shoumeng 壽夢 (?-561 B.C.), the nineteenth successor of the chiefdom, took the title of *wang* 王 ("king") formerly reserved for the Zhou ruler who was regarded as the Son of Heaven, i.e. the overall ruler of China. It is also from then on that the chronicle years are precisely recorded for Wu. (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 1) Wu established a close relationship with the state of Jin 晉 in Central China, which intended to unite with Wu so as to neutralise Chu's threat to the north. With the help of Jin from around the 580s B.C., especially in the matter of imported advanced techniques of archery, charioteering and battle formation, the rapidly developing state of Wu started to attack Chu and dispossessed Chu of all its vassals in the South-east.[16] Consequently, Wu became more powerful and made frequent contact with other states in Central China. It thus took up an active role in the struggle for the hegemony.[17]

Whereas wars between the states of Wu and Chu were frequent, culminating in the former's great victory over the latter in 506 B.C. when Chu's capital city, Ying 郢, was temporarily captured, (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 54: "Duke Ding 4th Year;" *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4: "Helü Neizhuan") the history of Wu from the late sixth century B.C. was in a sense a history of its struggling for supremacy against its chief enemy, the state of Yue in the south. According to the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 53: "Duke Zhao 32nd Year") and Du Yu's commentary, after decades of skirmishes on the borders between the two states, King Helü 闔閭 (?-496 B.C.) of Wu initiated a full-scale offensive against Yue for the first time in 510 B.C. and took one of Yue's northern strongholds,

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15 An informative event, for example, was recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*, (vol. 22: "Duke Xuan 8th Year") when Chu, allying with Wu and Yue, sent an expedition against Shu 舒 and Liao 蓼. Du Yu 杜預 (A.D. 222-284) comments, "It was said that as Chu was powerful, Wu and Yue obeyed it."

16 Ironically, as Creel (1970:224) observes, the people of Wu learned their lessons so well that they were soon not only a match for Chu, but within a century had become a more serious threat to the north than Chu had ever been.

17 *Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 26: "Duke Cheng 7th Year;" *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 2: "Wuwang Shoumeng Zhuan." Cf. Granet 1930:92-3.

Zuili 檇里 (to the south-west of present-day Jiaxing 嘉興 in Zhejiang 浙江). In 505 B.C. when Wu's main force remained in Chu, Yue seized this opportunity to make a major incursion into Wu.[18] (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 55: "Duke Ding 5th Year") In retaliation for this action, Helü led Wu's forces once again in an attack on Yue in 496 B.C.; but this time he was defeated and died of a severe wound in the same year. (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 56: "Duke Ding 14th Year")

To avenge his father's death, Fuchai 夫差 (?-473 B.C.), who succeeded to the throne in 495 B.C., waged a bitter war against Yue in the following year and won a decisive victory at Fushu 夫椒 (a mountain island in present-day Lake Tai), which he followed up by a hot pursuit of Yue's forces to Kuaiji 會稽, the Yue capital, at present-day Shaoxing. King Goujian 勾踐 (?-465 B.C.) of Yue was forced to surrender and subsequently came to the Wu palace, serving there as a hostage. (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 57: "Duke Ai 1st Year") Although, after his three-year period as a hostage in Wu, Goujian was allowed to return home once again as the king of Yue, it became at this point a *de facto* vassal state of Wu. A hidden peril then remained for Wu. It was acknowledged by both Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (?-484 B.C.), a prominent minister of Wu, and his counterpart of Yue, Fan Li 范蠡, that in this narrow south-east corner, the two states could never co-exist forever - eventually either Wu annexed Yue, or Yue subjugated Wu.[19] (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 5: "Qingdiao Neizhuan;" vol. 7) In 473 B.C., Wu was at last destroyed by Yue.[20]

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18 Granet (1930:93) holds that it was this attack by Yue to the rear of Wu that put an end to the latter's success.

19 Wu Zixu was most conscious of the danger that Yue posed to Wu. Opposing Wu's campaign against the distant state of Qi 齊 in the north, he once argued vigorously that Wu should pay major attention to the potential threat from Yue in the south:

> To us, Yue is like a long-pending disease in the vital organs [of Wu]. When it does not issue forth, there is no pain; when it strikes, death is the consequence. [I] propose that we let go Qi and take Yue as our concern. (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 5)

The king of Wu did not take this advice but went on to attack Qi.

20 The *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 10: "Goujian Fa Wu Waizhuan") contains an interesting passage of Fan Li's advice to the king of Yue when the remnants of Wu were bottled up on Mt. Guxu 姑胥 to the west of its capital city. At this point, Goujian was disposed to clemency, just as Fuchai was at the time when Yue had been entirely at the mercy of Wu. Fan Li said:

> In the events of Kuaiji [where Yue was pinned down by Wu], Heaven bestowed Yue on Wu. Wu did not take it. Now Heaven bestows Wu on Yue. How can Yue goes against the mandate of Heaven? . . . When one does not take what Heaven gives, one exposes oneself to disaster.

Then Goujian proceeded to the attack and eventually killed the king of Wu. Granet (1930:31) sees this as a good example of "realist politics" under the guise of the ancient rhetoric of the wise ministers of the states situated on the borders of Central China.

1.2 SUZHOU PREFECTURE IN THE IMPERIAL ERA

After the subjugation of Wu by Yue in 473 B.C., the city of Suzhou was left as a remote local town of little importance, in the successive possession of Yue and Chu, until the prime minister of Chu, Lord Chunshen (Chunshen Jun 春申君 [?-238 B.C.]),[21] was enfeoffed in the Wu area in 248 B.C., and took the city as his capital. (*Shi Ji*, vol. 78: "Chunshen Jun Liezhuan," no. 18) After the Qin unification in 221 B.C. and the abolition of the feudal system, the city constantly housed the seat of a prefecture,[22] or even of a higher administrative unit, notably during the Ming and Qing periods. However, the Suzhou region did not markedly develop in the early imperial period. According to Sima Qian 司馬遷 (*c.* 145-*c.* 85 B.C.), the Jiangnan 江南 (lit. "south of the River [Yangzi]") region in which Suzhou is situated remained sparsely populated in the second half of the Western Han 漢 period (206 B.C.-A.D. 9), and the primitive method of cultivation, known as *huogeng shuinou* 火耕水耨 (lit. "ploughing after burning [the field] and weeding with water") was still widely in practice; people were living at such a moderate standard that "no one froze or starved, but no family had great wealth either." (*Shi Ji*, vol. 129: "Huozhi Liezhuan," no. 69) It was only from the early fourth century when the royal court of Jin 晉 fled to the Yangzi valley, accompanied by the exodus of the population of northerly China to the south because of the famine and the political, economic and administrative chaos that prevailed in North China, and of the occurrence of the tribal rebellions there, that agriculture of this region, especially the area known as San Wu 三吳 (lit. "the three Wus"),[23] started to boom.[24] (Lü 1983:1078) Yet significant growth of the city in both economic and

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21 Huang Xie 黃歇 is the name of the man in question, while Chunshen Jun is a title of honour (*hao* 號) given to him by King Kaolie 考烈 of Chu. In later times, a man's *hao* might be either a self-given name or one given by others in respect.

22 The area of Suzhou was converted only occasionally to an enfeoffment for very short periods before the end of the Tang dynasty.

23 This term as the name of an area has evoked many interpretations which I shall not enumerate here. (For further information, cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 48: "Kaozheng;" CY I 1979:29; CH 1980:15) No matter how controversial the issue is, it is certain that the term denotes an important area in the South-east, and that Suzhou prefecture was an important part of it.

24 According to the *Song Shu*, (vol. 54: "Liezhuan," no. 14: "Kong Jigong") after a relatively peaceful period (from the early fourth century to the mid fifth century) in the South-east, "if [one prefecture in the region] enjoyed a year of harvest, then [the people of] several prefectures could forget about starvation." In the *Zizhi Tongjian*, (vol. 163: "Liang Ji," 19: "Taizong Jianwen Huangdi," A: "The First Year of Dabao [reign-period]") we read,

> Since the Jin family crossed the River [Yangzi], San Wu has been the

cultural terms does not date until the time when the demographic centre of the whole of China began to shift to the Yangzi provinces, in the ninth and tenth centuries. Accordingly, this section only provides a cursory description of the development of Suzhou prefecture, mainly in the second half of the imperial era. It sketches a rough economic, social and cultural background for further discussions of the city in the following chapters.

1.2.1 Economic Growth

Suzhou's substantial economic growth started during the Tang period (A.D. 618-907). In the second half of the eighth century, the development of the rice-growing areas of the Yangzi basin and South China had begun to gather impetus with the adoption of the technique of planting out seedlings and the appearance of new tools for tilling and irrigating the soil.[25] The superiority of this region in agriculture to any other areas in China became obvious as rice, the yield of which is in fact the highest of all the major cereals - roughly twice that of the millet usually

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> richest and most populous [region]; tribute, taxes and merchants have all come from this area.

Even after the devastation inflicted upon this area by what Chinese historians call the Houjing zhi Luan 侯景之亂 (lit. "the rebellion led by Hou Jing," A.D. 548-552), the San Wu region was still highly esteemed for its agricultural advantages, as the first emperor of the Southern Chen 陳 considered:

> San Wu, as the heart of the territory, used to be called a rich and fertile land. Although sometimes wars and famines have occurred there, it is still an area of abundance and prosperity. (*Chen Shu*, vol. 25: "Liezhuan," no. 19: "Pei Ji")

25 Progress in agriculture in the Lower Yangzi plain was not only promoted by waves of south-eastward immigrants who introduced to this region the more advanced technology of cultivation and irrigation long developed in Central China, but also based upon the superior economic conditions of the region - "conditions," as Mote (1973:44) concisely puts it, "favourable both to a higher margin in agriculture and a cheaper and more convenient distribution using water transport." In fact, the advantage of this land of waters has been emphasised by many ancient Chinese scholars. An assessment of it by Sima Qian is that Suzhou in Qin and Han times "had rich resources of sea salt, bronze ore in Mt. Zhang 章, and the benefit of the Three Rivers and the Five Lakes; [thus it was] also a major city in the South-east." (*Shi Ji*, vol. 129: "Huozhi Liezhuan," no. 69) In the *Sui Shu* (vol. 31: "Zhi," no. 26: "Dili," B) we read that the area with its "rivers, lakes and fertile soil has the plenitude provided by the waters and flat lands. Precious and rare goods are gathered here, and thus merchants and businessmen converge here." In the third year of the Xining 熙寧 reign-period (1068-1077) of the Song, Jia Dan 郟亶 (1038-1103) in his memorial presented to the emperor points out: "[If we] should say that none of the benefits of all-under-Heaven can surpass that of the watered paddy-fields, then none of the beauties of the watered paddy-fields can surpass those of Suzhou." (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 19: "Shuili," A) Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) even claims, "[The area of] the River Song 松 and Lake Tai 太, a land of criss-crossing waters, can certainly boast itself first under Heaven." (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Xingshi")

grown in the North, began to dominate the nation's food crop production. (Sun 1983:284; cf. Eastman 1988:9) The region south of the Yangzi thus became the richest area, one on which the empire economically relied; Suzhou prefecture was at the heart of it and regarded as the most prominent part of the region.[26] After the mid-eighth century, for example, the total amount of tax annually paid by the Liangzhe 兩浙 region,[27] consisting only of thirteen prefectures but heavily levied, was 6,650,000 strings of cash (*guan* 貫), while 1,050,000 *guan* were collected from Suzhou (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 1: "Hukou, Shuizu") - the amount was twice the average from each prefecture in the Liangzhe region, and made up 3.5 per cent of the contemporary annual Inland Revenue.[28]

During the course of the following centuries, this upsurge of rice growing continued and expanded. Gernet (1982:319) holds that this "was undoubtedly one of the great events in this period of the history of East Asia." As extensive water conservancy projects were carried out during the Song 宋 period (960-1276), (Cf. *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. C: "Zhishui;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 19: "Shuili") and progress in methods of rice cultivation continued, the economic strength of Suzhou, at that time officially known as Pingjiang 平江 prefecture, further increased to such an extent that the following two proverbs came into circulation:

> Above in Heaven there is the celestial palace, below on Earth there are Suzhou and Hangzhou 杭州 (*tianshang tiantang, dixia Su-Hang* 天上天堂,地下蘇杭)

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26 Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) in the introduction to one of his poems indicates that "nowadays nine-tenth of the taxes from all-under-Heaven are levied on the region south of the Yangzi." (*Han Changli Wenji Jiaozhu*, vol. 4: "Xu": "Song Lu Shezhou Shixu") Although the proportional figure he used is certainly an artistic hyperbole, it does however point to the fact that, in the words of Du Mu 杜牧 (803-*c.* 852), "today the world takes the region around the River Yangzi and River Huai as its lifeblood." (*Quan Tang Wen*, vol. 753: "Du Mu," no. 6: "Shang Zaixiang Qiu Hangzhou Qi") As for the importance of Suzhou prefecture, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) claims that "nowadays most of the state expenditure comes from the region south of the Yangzi; and amongst the prefectures of this region, Suzhou is the largest." (*Quan Tang Wen*, vol. 666: "Bai Juyi," no. 11: "Suzhou Cishi Xieshang Biao") Similar accounts were given in 814 by Yuan Xi 元錫 in his "Suzhou Cishi Xieshang Biao." (*Quan Tang Wen*, vol. 693: "Yuan Xi")

27 Emperor Xiaozong 蕭宗 of the Tang in 758 established two administrative regions (*fangzhen* 方鎮) in the South-east, namely the Zhejiang Xidao 浙江西道 (lit. "the west circuit of the River Zhe") and the Zhejiang Dongdao 浙江東道 (lit. "the east circuit of the River Zhe"). The two regions were sometimes collectively called Liangzhe (lit. "the two Zhe"). (Cf. CY I 1979:293, III 1981:1792-3; CH 1980:937)

28 According to the *Xin Tang Shu*, (vol. 37: "Zhi," no. 27: "Dili," no. 1; vol. 52: "Zhi," no. 42: "Shihuo," no. 2) the annual Inland Revenue from 780 on was just over 30,000,000 *min* 緡 (=*guan*) collected from 328 prefectures. Thus the amount of tax levied on the Liangzhe region counted as 22.2% of the annual Inland Revenue.

When the harvest of Suzhou and Huzhou 湖州 is ripe, the world is satiated" (*Su-Hu shu, tianxia zu* 蘇湖熟,天下足).
(*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 50: "Zazhi")

Rice-growing made it possible to release a large number of people from working the soil, and the surplus production of the plains to the south of the Lower Yangzi favoured the development of interregional trade, the commercialisation of agricultural produce, the upsurge of craftsmen and the growth of big urban centres. The city of Suzhou was certainly one of them. Yet for Suzhou, as observed by Marmé, (1993:17) the currency of the proverbs marked the beginning of a new stage in the city's development, not its culmination - in both economic and demographic terms, it could not match Kaifeng 開封 during the Northern Song period (960-1126), nor could it rival the Southern Song capital at Hangzhou.[29]

During the Yuan 元 period (1279-1368), the Hangzhou region stagnated as a result of the centre of political power being located by the Mongol rulers on the North China Plain. By contrast, Suzhou prefecture experienced dramatic growth,[30] probably brought about by the government's decision to send southern grain north by sea. (Marmé 1993:25-6) A temporary setback for Suzhou occurred in the second half of the fourteenth century when repeated wars broke out in the region, followed by the exile or execution of its social, economic and cultural elites, and by the higher taxes[31] imposed on it by Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), the founder of the Ming 明 (1368-1644), who tried to punish the big landowners of Suzhou for supporting his chief rival, Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321-1367). (Mote 1962; cf. Dreyer 1982) Yet, as Marmé (op.cit. 30) emphasises, late

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29 During the Tang period, Suzhou prefecture was believed to be second to none in the west circuit of the River Zhe. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 50: "Zazhi") Yet at least by the eleventh century, Suzhou could no longer rival Hangzhou in its economic development under the Northern Song, and much less the Song capital at Kaifeng. During the Southern Song period (1127-1276), the gap separating Hangzhou from Suzhou widened as the former was designated as the "temporary" capital. (See Marmé 1993:17-9)

30 Within a period of fifteen years from 1275 to 1290, the registered population of the prefecture rose from 329,603 households to 466,158. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 13: "Tianfu," no. 2: "Hukou")

31 The property of the big landowners of the Jiangnan region was classified as official land and taxed ten to fifteen times as heavily as private land. Suzhou prefecture alone was assessed for one-tenth of the state's land tax, most of it being applied to official land at a rate of thirty to seventy percent of the crops' value. Although whether the wealthy families ever complied is doubtful, this heavy tax burden is undeniable. In the fourth month of 1380, a twenty percent reduction of taxes was decreed, but even after this the land tax remained exorbitant: in 1393, for instance, Suzhou alone was taxed 9.55 percent of the Inland Revenue, whereas the registered cultivated land of the prefecture stood only at 1.16 percent of that of the whole empire. (Liang 1980:435, Table 5; Chan 1988:190)

fourteenth-century Suzhou was no longer the half-submerged, under populated and semi-developed area that it had been at the beginning of the Southern Song in the early twelfth century. As the imperial capital was formally transferred from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421, the rise of Suzhou became clearly visible, as it was playing a key role in the integration of China's now separate economic and political centres, which was ensured by the extensive use of the Grand Canal.[32]

I have noted that from as early as the Northern Song on, the increased productivity of agriculture freed the rice-producing farmers from the necessity to retain the main portion of that basic crop for their own subsistence. During the Ming, ever larger numbers of persons in the growing population could engage in secondary production and in distribution. The production of luxury goods, and the rapid growth of textile industries[33] were typical of the Suzhou area. Thanks to the convenience and economy of water transport which characterised this region, the city of Suzhou played an organising role in the aggregation of raw materials and the distribution of finished products around an ever larger hinterland. By the sixteenth century, Suzhou had emerged as the economic and cultural centre of China's richest, most urbanised and most advanced region. Continuously developed during the Qing period (1644-1911), it remained the central metropolis integrating and dominating that region well into the 1860s when the Taiping 太平 rebellion brought its prominence to a disastrous end and its leading role was overtaken by Shanghai. (Skinner 1977a:17) Suzhou's economic domination was indeed partly reflected in its annual land tax payment to the state, unquestionably the highest among all prefectures. Accounting for around 1.16 percent of the registered cultivated land in the whole empire, in 1393, Suzhou prefecture was taxed 9.55 percent of the state's total land tax; in 1491, 7.81 percent; in 1578, 7.86 percent; in the early seventeenth century, 12.39 percent; and in 1820, 9.85 percent.[34] Thus the following metaphorical assessment of the prefecture by the authors of the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 2: "Xingshi": "Suzhoufu") can hardly be seen as

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32 Marmé (1993:30) also notes that Suzhou's ability to prosper while paying such heavy taxes depended from the outset on the thoroughly commercialised character of the local economy. "The prefecture," he argues, "was as much the victim of its economic maturity as of its political indiscretions."

33 Suzhou also boasts a long history of superior textile productivity. After the Eastern Jin period, according to the *Song Shu*, (vol. 54: "Liezhuan," no. 14: "Kong Jigong") textile industry in the South-east was developed to the extent that "the abundance of its silk floss and wadding, cloth and silk fabrics has provided clothes for the whole world." Cotton only came to be widely cultivated in this region during the Yuan, but its production expanded most quickly in Ming times. Paper-making and many other industries boomed.

34 These figures are obtained from Liang 1980:401-13, Table 77; 435, Table 5..

exaggerating:

> The prefecture takes the River [Yangzi] as its pillow [at its back] and lies adjacent to Lake [Tai]. It enjoys the plenitude of [resources provided by] the sea and mountains, and embraces the benefits from the fertility of the soil. People are wealthy and numerous, and produce is abundant. The amount of tax [collected] from it is constantly above the highest [amongst all prefectures]. Some commentators have remarked that Wu [i.e. Suzhou] prefecture's [relationship] to the world is like the storehouse of a ménage, and the chest and stomach of a man.

Although Suzhou remained the great city of the region, urban growth from the Tang onward was general for Jiangsu province south of the Yangzi as a whole and not the one-sided growth of a single city. "The Lower Yangtse," Skinner (1977a:11) writes, "had been settled gradually over a period of centuries by migrants from North China, but it was above all during the T'ang that its city system was fleshed out and showed rapid growth." On the general process of the city system development in the economically advanced regions of imperial China from the mid-Tang onward, Skinner (op.cit. 25, 28) also addresses some of its characterisations: although a fundamental component of the urban revolution in the medieval era was the development of a more fully differentiated hierarchy of economic central places articulating the various regional economies, this city system was immature and uneven: capitals and market towns were only very imperfectly meshed into an integrated system, and the urban population as a whole was concentrated in the largest cities. By contrast, the city systems of the late imperial era were better integrated into a single hierarchical system, and the total urban population was more evenly distributed throughout the hierarchy, whereas the levels of urbanisation were higher in the medieval era than in late imperial times.

The urbanisation of the area around the city of Suzhou which had long functioned as an economic apex[35] was typical of this process of city system

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35 Skinner (1977a:16-7) has succinctly summarised the temporal pattern of urban development in the Lower Yangzi after the medieval urban revolution. During the phase of late Tang and Northern Song, the relatively complex urban system that developed was focused on Yangzhou as the central metropolis. The designation of Hangzhou as the Southern Song capital caused the urban structure to be reoriented further southward to the imperial capital. Nanjing came to play the central role after the fourteenth century as the Ming founder vastly enlarged the city as his political base, this being followed by the longer and somewhat more dramatic developmental cycle during the period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, in which Suzhou rose to prominence as the regional metropolis. The cycle from the late nineteenth century onward was intimately associated with the rise of Shanghai. Yet Skinner also notices that even before and after its heyday as the Lower Yangzi's central metropolis, Suzhou maintained its standing as a commercial and

development. Three features of this process can be identified. First, a cluster of secondary cities around Suzhou grew from the mid-Tang onward into the ten thousand class in and after, if not before, the sixteen century. They included not only county cities of Suzhou prefecture in the Ming period, such as Kunshan 崑山, Changshu 常熟, Taicang 太倉, Jiading 嘉定 and Wujiang 吳江, but also those of adjacent prefectures, notably Wuxi 無錫 and Jiangyin 江陰. The second feature was the burgeoning of market towns in the hinterland of Suzhou after the mid-Tang.[36] The number of these market towns, as was the case in the other more economically advanced parts of China, began to multiply extensively some time in the course of the seventeenth century, many of such towns being reputed in their specialised, notably cotton and silk, industries and trade. (Elvin 1973:268) All of these market towns, like those in the hinterland of Shanghai which started to boom much later, (op.cit. 268-9) helped the flow of persons, goods, money and ideas locally, regionally, and nationally. Third, the spill-out of the city from within its walls may have occurred as early as the mid-Tang period. It was firstly outside Chang 閶 Gate in the west by north of the city walls, and later in Ming times Xu 胥 Gate in the west by south - both providing access to the Grand Canal which functioned as the major trade route - that the most remarkable commercial suburbs developed; and these spawned suburbs which were connected with the market towns such as Fengqiao 楓橋, Hengtang 橫塘 and Mudu 木瀆 in the further west, seem to have formed a larger area of conurbation. The geographical conditions of the hinterland and the accessibility to the major trade route conversely had a great impact on the general pattern of the partitioning of urban space based on occupations. Thus, by the nineteenth century, the area of Suzhou, like other more advanced parts of the country, witnessed what Elvin (1973:318) calls "the perfection of a network of local and regional markets, efficiently connected and functionally differentiated,"[37] on which subsidiary peasant handicrafts relied, providing the main portion of the industrial output.[38]

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political centre of major importance.

36 Yangzhou in the tenth century was the leading metropolis in the Lower Yangzi region, and the development of market towns in its hinterland at that time must have been a step further ahead of that in the case of Suzhou.

37 In Elvin's (1973:318) words, "nowhere in the world of 1800 was the hierarchy of urban central places so maturely developed as in the more advanced parts of China."

38 The cotton industry, for example, was probably the largest single industry in China in late imperial times, (Elvin 1973:270) but the spinning and weaving of cotton were not conducted in the city but in the rural areas. (GTJ, vol. 676) Similar features could also be found in other industries. The silk industry was in the early Ming period largely controlled by the government through its official establishment of weaving productivity (*zhizao ju* 織造局) located in the city, but from the mid-sixteenth century onward, private weavers

1.2.2 Population

The first marked demographic growth in the Suzhou area occurred in the early fourth century A.D. when the flow of Chinese population from the north to the south started. From then on, it continued to grow, though fluctuating as famines, epidemics and wars periodically took a catastrophic toll of human lives. By the late imperial period, the population density of the prefecture became the highest among all prefectures in the empire. Take the figure for 1820 for instance: the population of Suzhou prefecture stands in fourth place behind Wuchang 武昌, Guangzhou 廣州 and Chengdu 成都, but its population density was the highest, at 1,073 persons per square kilometre, followed by that of nearby Jiaxing 嘉興 prefecture at 719 persons per square kilometre. (Liang 1980:273-9, Table 88) This figure is in sharp contrast to the ones for Han times, estimated by Liang Fangzhong, (1980:14, Table 4; 26, Table 8) namely 12.3 persons per square kilometre in A.D. 2 and 18.1 persons per square kilometre in A.D. 140.

Of course, the size of the prefectural territory varied immensely. In fact what we find in the development of field administration of Suzhou prefecture is the process of the "shrinking" of its territory - the continuous division of counties under the jurisdiction of the prefecture, and of the reduction of the area of the prefectural territory. All the local documents inform us that, once the population and economic condition of one of Suzhou's counties reached a certain point, its territory was divided, and a new county was subsequently established; by the same token, the prefectural territory was deducted from some of its old counties being reorganised to form a new prefecture. To illustrate this process visually, I juxtapose in Figure 1-3 the diagrammatic maps of the area under the jurisdiction of Suzhou prefecture during the Eastern Han, Tang, Song and Qing periods. In fact, as Naquin and Rawski (1987:152) have noted too, Suzhou from 1724 onward was the only city in the empire to be the seat of three counties, and Jiangsu after 1760 was the only province with two financial commissioners. This pattern of change may have been exceptional in the history of Chinese field administration, if Skinner's (1977a:19) argument proves to be the case that the number of county-level units

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proliferated, and their productivity was based probably not much more in the city than in the countryside. (Duan and Zhang 1986:1-92) This, together with some other characteristics of industrial production and distribution, leads to Elvin's (1973:277) apparently paradoxical proposition that in late imperial times, "the Chinese countryside was both overindustrialised and overcommercialised."

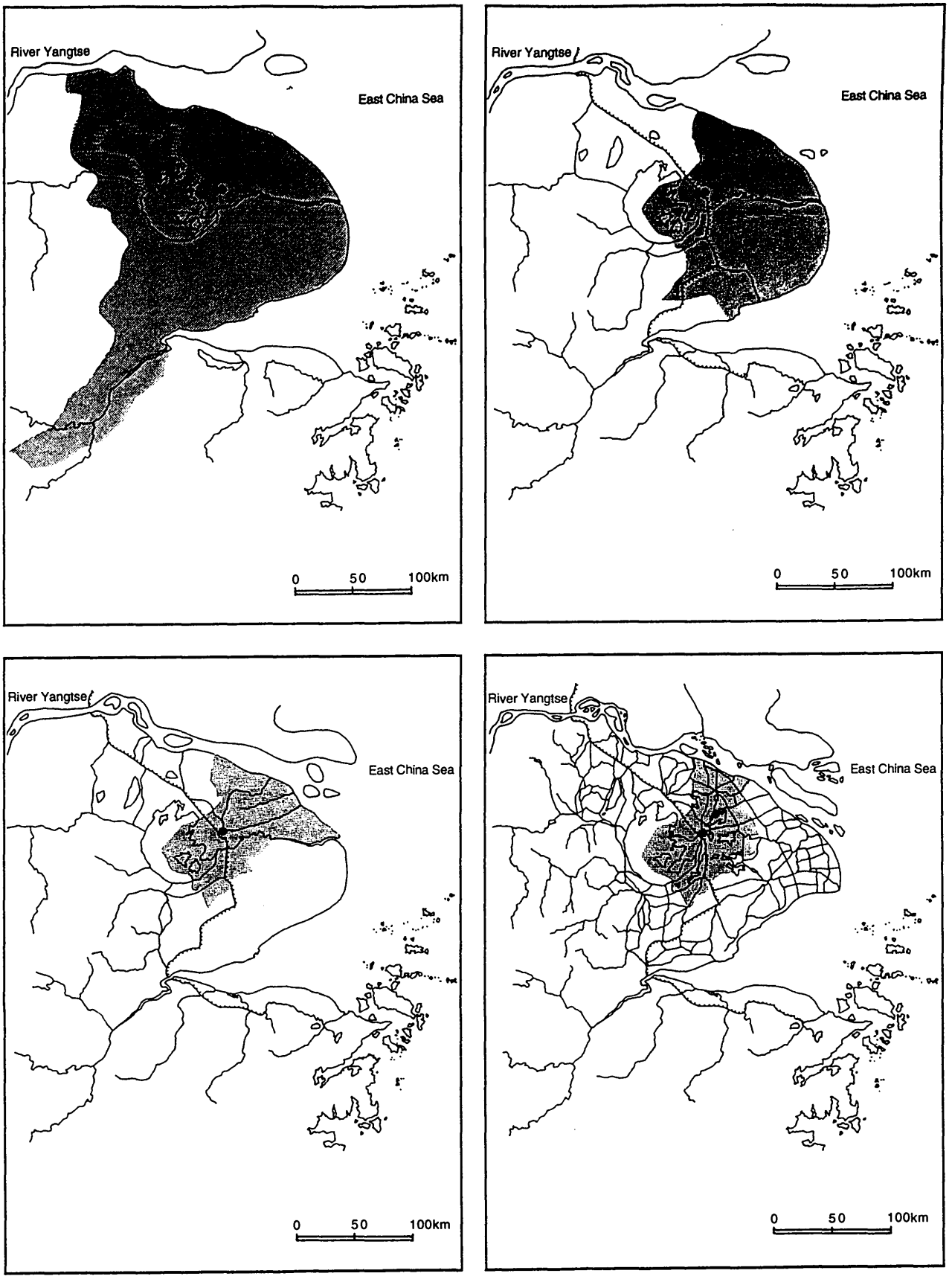

Figure 1-3 Territories of Suzhou prefecture during the Eastern Han (top left), Tang (top right), Song (bottom left) and Qing (after 1724, bottom right) periods. Adapted from Tan (1982:vol. 2:24-5, vol. 5:21-2, vol. 6:24-5 and vol. 8:58-9).

in the whole of China throughout imperial history was remarkably stable; consequently, since new counties were continually being founded as the boundaries expanded, the number of counties in the already settled areas was being regularly reduced rather than increased, and the average area of counties over the dynasties gradually increased rather than decreased.[39] If we are to assume that under pre-modern conditions, population was a reasonable mirror of the size of an economy, these aspects tell us how advanced Suzhou's economy was during the late imperial period as compared to other regions in China.

As for the population of the city itself, because Chinese cities were not corporate entities, Chinese statistics usually do not preserve separate figures for the populations of what we would call the cities, but include the strictly urban population figures within the statistics for the administrative units to which they belonged, i.e., the counties or prefectures. Therefore it is not surprising that, among all the statistic records available to us, the only figure that appears close to representing the urban population of Suzhou is the one obtained in 1906, when the police examined the house numbers within the city and its near suburbs, which stood at 32,994 households. Even this figure can hardly be seen as accurate, for many shabby dwellings simply did not have a number plate on their doors. Nevertheless, Mote (1973:39) estimates that the population of the city of Suzhou in 1229 was about three hundred thousand, and it had probably already reached this size several hundred years before that year. He also suggests that it probably reached the half-million mark in the sixteenth century, and may have been close to one million just before the Taiping Rebellion.[40] The city population in 1911, including the suburbs, was estimated at seven hundred thousand by an American

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39 Skinner (1977a:17-23) then argues that the reasons for this tendency were, in the face of population growth and territory expansion, a secular decline in governmental effectiveness from mid-Tang on to the end of the imperial era, and a steady reduction in basic-level administrative central functions from one era to the next, so as to keep co-ordination and control within the capabilities of the agrarian state. Yet Eberhard (1962:268) suggests that "typically, the other cities [than imperial capitals] of classical China stopped growing when they had reached an 'optimum' size because the government would need, in a heavily inhabited area, to create a new administrative centre which would draw population away from the old centre." He then explains further: "the Chinese government . . . broke up units which had grown too much, creating two districts out of one. We do not yet know where, in terms of population, the 'optimum' was. Over time, Chinese skill in administration grew (especially since Sung time), but at the same time, higher efficiency was desired." (268, note 1) It seems that Eberhard is talking about the regions which were economically most advanced.

40 Skinner, (1977a:29) however, makes a more cautious estimate of the population of the city of Suzhou at seven hundred thousand in the 1840s, which view has later been shared by Naquin and Rawski. (1987:152)

Presbyterian missionary named Hampden C. du Bose who lived in Suzhou at that time, while it remained between a half-million and six hundred thousand in the Republican era. (Mote 1973:42) Whether these figures are accurate is less important than the fact that Suzhou, as pointed out by Mote, (Ibid.) starting at the size it had reached by the twelfth or thirteenth century, has continued in stable, if slow, growth, remaining always one of the major cities of its region, throughout the last seven or eight centuries.[41]

1.2.3 Cultural Transformation

Accompanying the economic growth was the gradual change in the social values and conduct of this region. Information about local customs in the Qin and Han periods is summarised in the *Han Shu* (vol. 28: "Dili Zhi," no. 8B):

> Gentlemen in [ancient] Wu and Yue were all fond of gallantry. Thus the people there nowadays still relish the practice of swordplay; [they] take death lightly and get agitated easily.[42]

This statement seems to indicate, although apparently without any depreciation, that it was fighting rather than book-studying that was notable there, and thus that this area remained in the eyes of the "civilised men" of Central China as much culturally semi-barbarian as economically underdeveloped.

As more people from North China migrated southward and the economy, especially that of agriculture, boomed in the South, the insemination of Confucian values was accelerated in this area. Therefore, although in the Sui 隋 period (581-618), it is still recorded that "the people of this region all practised the arts of war, and were reputed to constitute the crack troops of the world," a new assessment is also documented:

> [Amongst] the people there, nobles uphold *li* 禮 [lit. "proper ritual"], and commoners are innocent and honest. Thus the customs are those of the unblemished and unsophisticated, whilst the intensity and appropriateness of the teaching of the principles of

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41 Mote (1973:42) argues that probably no cities in the world, except for Suzhou and some other cities of its class in China, have experienced this kind of development. He indicates that Kyoto among non-Chinese cities may come closest to matching this record, although as a national capital it was more subject to the vicissitudes of political change, and has experienced both more physical change and greater declines of population than have Suzhou and a number of China's larger cities. (op.cit. 63, note 9)

42 See also *Taiping Huanyu Ji*, vol. 91: "Jiangnan Dongdao," no. 3: "Suzhou," quotation from the *Junguo Zhi*.

> life are what its general mood esteems. (*Sui Shu*, vol. 31: "Zhi," no. 26: "Dili," B)

The rooting of the Confucian ideology in the social life of this area is further stressed by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1041-1098), a prominent local scholar of his time. After mentioning a saying said to have been current in the Eastern Han about contemporary commendable customs, he writes in his *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. A: "Fengsu"):

> Thus that the people of Wu are more taken up with Confucian doctrines and fond of believing [in Buddhism] and giving alms, probably has its evolved reasons. Yet [their present inclination to] boasting wealth and indulging in luxury and extravagance already had its precedents in the past. . . . As this dynasty has enjoyed lasting stability and peace, people are courteous and moral; every child has a knowledge of diction, calligraphy and painting, and the old cannot distinguish a dagger-axe from a lance. . . . Within the territory there is no serious banditry, and around the neighbourhoods there is no rape or killing; it can be said that [here] is a land of happiness under Heaven.[43]

This passage reveals to us two related, but in a sense contradictory, aspects of change in social customs. On the one hand, Confucian values were gradually implanted in every corner of the social life of the locals; literature and arts as the very epitome of Chinese High Culture prevailed, and using swords and spears for fighting as a distinctive character of the ancient local customs became faint memories. The acquisition of wealth by trade, textile industry and the production of other luxury goods generally did not lead to systematic capital formation and to the deployment of resources to economic activities of the greatest return. Before the late imperial period, Suzhou was typical in its use of capital in that it poured the excess of its great wealth mostly into land, and into cultural attainments. Both in the long term were secure and reliable investments in status and in assisting access to moderate wealth; both reinforced the normative component of Chinese civilisation and its predilection for cultural conservation.

Learning was continuously encouraged there as one of the Confucian principles; and it was arduously pursued by many as a both theoretical, and very practical, path to higher social status and official careers, and as the prestige affectation of all who could afford it, especially after Emperor Wen 文 (541-604) of the Sui 隋 in 587 introduced the imperial examination institution for the

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43 See also *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 2: "Fengsu" for Fan Chengda's accounts in the Southern Song period.

recruitment and promotion of civil servants (*keju zhidu* 科舉制度) to replace the old system of official recommendation and selection (*xuanshi* 選仕).[44] It was in the Song age, as noted by Gernet, (1982:304) that the system of recruitment competitions actually reached its greatest perfection. Education in the Suzhou area was further promoted when Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) established for the first time the prefectural school in the south part of the city; this establishment was even seen as setting a model that was about to be followed by all other prefectures, according to the memoir written by Zhu Changwen. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 4: "Xuexiao") Accordingly, academic success became highly significant. Figures for the distribution of *jinshi* 進仕 (lit. "presented scholars," highest examination graduates) degree-holders during the Qing period, for example, reveal that Jiangsu and Zhejiang ranked first and second for all China. (Ho 1962:226-37; Wakeman, Jr. 1975a:19-24) Suzhou was undoubtedly one of the leading prefectures of Jiangsu in this respect. Elman (1984:59, 121) indicates that Han Learning (*hanxue* 漢學), a school of scholarship that was prominent in the Qing, came into fashion in Suzhou in the eighteenth century, and soon swept through the academics there, often replacing Song Learning (*songxue* 宋學) as the vogue of instruction in many other Southeast schools.

Elman (1984:12) also points out that a close overlap existed between the book trade in China and the high level of cultural achievement in the Southeast, and that Suzhou was one of the book-collecting and printing centres in the Lower Yangzi for centuries. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602), one of the most famous scholar book-collectors during the Ming, regarded Suzhou as the centre for quality printing during the late Ming period, it being a place where printing shops were staffed by outstanding xylographers; (op.cit. 1984:142) and Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717-1796) noted the centrality of Suzhou scholar-bibliophiles since the Ming dynasty, and held that the Suzhou book-collections added immeasurably to the stature of the prefecture as a cultural centre. (Op.cit. 1984:147) Other cultural activities were also outstanding. Painting, for example, flourished in Suzhou from the Yuan onward, as did the related handicraft industries. The Wu School (*wupai* 吳派) of painting started by Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), Wen Zhengming 文征明 (1470-1559) and Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523) became so celebrated during the period between 1567 and 1644 that it was followed by hundreds of well-known scholar-painters;

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44 Cf. CH 1980:1747; CY III 1981:2298; Yang 1987:459, 460-1; Xu 1991:799-800, 802. Gernet (1982:257) insists, however, that this new method could not have been properly organised in a systematic way until the year 669.

and these three artists, together with their contemporary in Suzhou, Qiu Ying 仇英 (?-*c.* 1552), were later called in praise "the Four Painters of the Ming" (*Ming sijia* 明四家). (Wang 1985:409-16) Thus by the late imperial period, Suzhou was not only fostering the arts of China - the literary arts, music, painting, calligraphy, the craft arts, the decorative arts, and the minor arts contributing to elegant life, but was also lavishing wealth on gardens, art collections and religious institutions. Its residents' dress, their mansions, their delicate foods, their pleasure boats and pleasure houses, and their theatricals and festivals were reputed to be the finest in China.

On the other hand, however, long periods of relative peace and social stability and great wealth engendered arrogant and extravagant habits which were at odds with the ideal morality advocated by the Confucians. This trend seems to have been aggravated in the Ming and Qing dynasties when the prefecture reached the peak of its economic and cultural development. Not only did Suzhou have the lasting reputation from the Song to the Ming, that people there conducted their lives "commonly more in prodigality than in frugality, competed in festivities and possessions, and indulged in strolls and sight-seeing," (Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 2: "Fengsu;" *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 13: "Fengsu") but great wealth became to be lavished, in the eyes of many scholars of the Ming and Qing, solely on purposes of pleasure. Much of the activities which resulted was non-productive, resulting only in dissipation or exhaustion of resources and energies. Ironically, the extravagant life drew even larger amounts of labour into the production and distribution of luxury goods. Gu Gongxie 顧公燮 witnessed this state of affairs in the second half of the eighteenth century and points out its paradoxical social implication in his *Xiaoxia Xianji Zhaichao* (XXZ, vol. A: "Susu Shemi"):

> [If] there is a life of luxury and extravagance for thousands, then there is means of livelihood of [other] thousands. Should [we] intend to convert the luxury and extravagance of thousands back to purity and honesty, the means of livelihood for the survival of [other] thousands would certainly be almost cut off. This is [part of] the unchangeable structure [of nature] in which reduction and production revolve and exchange in the world.

We may conclude with Mote (1973:57) that Suzhou "was infamous in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a dissolute city." It is the other side of the coin.

In the fifth month of the year 825, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), one of the great poets of the Tang, was appointed as the prefect of Suzhou. On the ninth day of the ninth month that year, he held a banquet in a grand multi-storey hall known as the Qiyun Lou 齊雲樓 on the north wall of the inner-enclosure in the city, and wrote a poem[45] capturing moments of this experience and of reflection on his career. What he perceived there of the city is depicted in the following stanzas:

. . .
Half inebriated, I lean on the railing and look around:
Seven weirs, eight [city] gates and sixty residential wards.
Far and near, high and low, emerge scattered [Buddhist] temples,
From east to west, from north to south, gazing upon each other are bridges.
On the arteries and veins of waters the boats are lined up like fish scales,
Within the oblong city walls residential wards are arranged like a chess-board.
Filled with houses and trees leaving no gaps,
The expanse of ten *li* looks all bluish green.
I ask myself, "What talent and deeds do I have [to deserve to participate in administration],
And dwell in these grand halls at the centre [of the city]?"
. . .

In the first half of the ninth century, Suzhou had already emerged as one of the biggest cities in the South-east. "Densely populated," as observed again by Bai Juyi, "it surpasses Yangzhou; bustling with noise and excitement in its residential quarters, it matches half of Chang'an 長安."[46] Apart from the increased population and busy urban life, Bai draws for us - certainly not without hyperbole - a vivid picture of the city in his time: within the city walls that were laid out regularly in rectangular shape, and in which there were eight gates, residential wards were orderly and tightly spread out with abundant vegetation; rivers and canals criss-crossed the whole city, and across them numerous bridges were built; and in this vast urban area, temples were dotted everywhere, with the official prefectural residence situated at the centre of the city.

Of all these features, probably the most fascinating was the bridges across

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45 The poem is entitled *Jiuri Yanji Zuiti Junlou Jiancheng Zhou Yin Er Panguan* 九日宴集醉題郡樓兼呈周殷二判官. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 444)

46 The poem is entitled *Qiyunlou Wanwang Outi Shiyun Jiancheng Feng Shiyu Zhou Yin Er Xielü* 齊雲樓晚望偶題十韻兼呈馮侍御周殷二協律. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 447) Chang'an was the imperial capital of the Tang.

myriad rivers and canals. In 1072, on his way northward along the canal to the famous Buddhist centre on the Wutai 五臺 Mountains in Shanxi 山西, the Japanese Buddhist monk Seijin passed through the city. As he travelled from Hangzhou toward Suzhou he wrote in his diary: "There are wooden bridges and there are stone bridges; there are bridges of such number that I would not be able to know how many." (Mote 1973:48) He then spent two days there, and recorded what he saw in the city:

> All the government palaces and residences are similar in grandness and extent to those in Hangchow [i.e. Hangzhou]. The commerce in the markets is beyond imagining. There are 360 large stone bridges, for on [sic] east and west, on [sic] south and north, there are canals all about. (Op.cit. 49)

Twelve years later, Zhu Changwen eulogistically depicts the city his *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. A: "Chengyi"):

> Throughout this period of a century,[47] the wealth of all settlements [of this area] has surpassed that in the Tang period. The city [of Suzhou] not only is fully filled within its walls but spills out beyond them. Multi-storey halls are facing one another; flying bridges are like rainbows. [Houses are densely aligned together and widely spread out like] the teeth of a comb and a chess-board. Even the narrow alleys in the near suburbs are all paved with bricks. For great number of high officials and prominent figures, [Suzhou] ranks first in the Southeast. This is really a time of peace and prosperity.

In the twelfth month of 1275, Suzhou surrendered to the Mongols without a fight. A few years later, a Venetian merchant, Marco Polo (1254-1324), allegedly visited the city.[48] In his travel book, he writes:

> Suju [i.e. Suzhou] is a large and very noble city. They are idolaters, are subject to the Great Kaan, and have paper currency. They have immense quantities of silk. They live by trade and handicrafts. They make a great deal of silk cloth for clothes. There

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47 This refers to the period from 978 when the Wu-Yue 吳越 regime (907-978) surrendered to the Northern Song, to the time when Zhu Changwen wrote this passage.

48 Dr. Frances Wood, in her pioneering work, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (London: Seckel and Warburg, 1995), argues that Marco Polo never travelled further than the Black Sea and Constantinople, let alone lived in China for seventeen years. Some of the blindingly obvious exotic features of China - the Chinese script, the Great Wall, tea, or foot-binding - that Marco Polo somehow failed to notice, or at least to comment upon, indicate to Wood that he never set foot in the place. It seems possible that his accounts of many parts of China may have been lifted from a Persian or Arabic guidebook, but no such book, if one existed, survives. Yet one thing is certain, as Wood admits, whatever its provenance, Marco Polo's travel book remains a rich and useful source for thirteenth century China.

> are great and wealthy merchants. It is so large a city that it has a circuit of sixty miles. The population is so immense that it is beyond all counting. I assure you that, if they were soldiers, the men of Manji[49] would conquer all the rest of the world. But they are no soldiers; instead they are wise merchants, and clever in all handicrafts; and among them there are great natural philosophers, and great leeches who are learned in the secrets of nature. There are many magicians and diviners.
>
> You must know moreover that in this city there are quite 6000 stone bridges,[50] under which, one, and even two, galleys abreast might pass. . . .
>
> Know, too, that this city has sixteen other cities dependent upon it, all large and thriving with trade and handicrafts.[51] (Ross and Power 1931:232-33)

In spite of his exaggerations,[52] Marco Polo's descriptions indicate how large and how thoroughly urban in character the city of Suzhou, together with many other contemporary Chinese cities, was in the Yuan period. Two new, important aspects of Suzhou in this period are revealed here: one is the apparent multitude of wealthy merchants in and around the city; the other is the continued expansion of urban settlements well beyond the area previously enclosed by the city walls.[53]

The city's recovery after the harsh years of the early Ming became substantiated in the second half of the fifteenth century. Wang Qi 王錡 (1432-1499), a native scholar of Changzhou 長洲 county, noted the fact that Suzhou "was always reputed as prosperous and flourishing," and that it remained desolate for over half a century after the Ming conquest. He witnessed the partial resurgence of its economy and urban life during the reign-periods Zhengtong 正統 (1436-1449) and Tianshun 天順 (1457-1464), but emphasised that substantial rejuvenation came only during the Chenghua 成化 reign-period (1465-1487). By the late fifteenth century, Suzhou was in his eyes once again a thriving city. He writes:

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49 *Manzi* 蠻子, a derogatory term used by the Mongols for the southern Chinese subjects of the Song. Note that the character *man* was previously used by the Han Chinese for the people in the south. (Cf. section 1.1.2)

50 The number of the bridges within the city is exaggerated here by twenty times.

51 See also Balazs' (1964:66-100) discussions of Chinese cities by reference to Marco Polo's accounts.

52 Marco Polo was later nicknamed Il Milione for his habit of exaggeration.

53 At the beginning of the Yuan period, the city walls, over fifteen kilometres in circumference, were ordered to be dismantled. (See section 4.2) Marco Polo's account that the city had "a circuit of sixty miles," apart from exaggeration, must have included many areas that were on the outskirts of the city.

> The eaves of houses converge like the spokes of a wheel at the hub, and tens of thousands of tiled roofs are as densely packed as fish scales. From the corners of the city wall to the tributaries of the city moat, pavilions and multi-storey buildings spread out so densely that there is no unoccupied place left. Horse-drawn carriages, mixing with those carrying various food or gift containers, speed up and down the streets and alleys that extend in all directions; all are lustrous and dazzling. Ships gliding around hills and pleasure-boats blossoming with singing girls are flowing one after another through the green waves and the vermilion multi-storey buildings. The melody of musical instruments, of songs and of dances mingle with the noises of the market. (*Yupu Zaji* 寓圃雜記, vol. 5. In Xie 1981 vol. B, pp. 111-2)

Suzhou by this time had, as recognised by Ch'oe Pu 崔溥, a Korean official who praised Suzhou's splendour and renown in 1488, truly become the cultural centre of the empire, home to a large number of scholars; it was a place where every kind of manufactured article, cheap or expensive, could be found, and the destination of all the most skilful craftsmen and wealthiest merchants. Most importantly, he mentions the development in the area outside Chang 閶 Gate in the west city wall: "At the port of Changmen, merchant ships hailing from Hubei 湖北 and Fujian 福建 gather like clouds." (Santangelo 1993:82-3)

The city throughout the second half of the Qing undoubtedly made deep impressions upon British, French and American visitors. William Alexander, an artist who accompanied the British ambassador Lord Macartney, recorded that he travelled there on 7 November 1793, and "at 2 p.m. arrived at the famous and flourishing city of Sou-tcheou [i.e. Suzhou], passing through but a portion of it where the canal is close under the walls of the city . . . many houses project over the canal reminding me of Canaletto's views of Venice. . . ." (Johnston 1983:203) This is not the lone voicing of comparison between Suzhou and Venice. Laurence Oliphant's (1845:584) record made in the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, contains the following lines:

> It has been compared by the French missionaries to Venice,[54] with this difference, that Súchau [i.e. Suzhou] is two days distant from the sea, being accessible only by small inland water, [sic] communications. . . . Its situation in the midst of large channels of water is beautiful; the country all around is very pleasant; its

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54 Elsewhere, Oliphant (1970:198, 206) has made similar statements that "in the city . . . the lanes of water . . . like those of Venice, opened up in divers [sic] directions," and that the most remarkable feature he could catch in passing "was the numerous canals intersecting it in every direction, spanned, rialto fashion, by high single arches, and with houses rising out of the water as in Venice."

> climate is delightful, and it is said by many to be the most populous city of the empire. . . .

He continues to remark on other features of the city:

> Súchau is like Hángchau [i.e. Hangzhou] not only a town of large commerce and great silk manufactures, but a place of diversion and pleasure. "Above," say the Chinese, "is paradise, below are Sú and Háng." . . . In fact, Súchau has a high reputation throughout China, for the magnificence of its ancient and new marble buildings, the elegance of its tombs, the multitude of its granite bridges and artificial canals, the picturesque scenery of its waters, streets, gardens and quays, the politeness of its inhabitants, and especially for the beauty of the female sex.
>
> It is said that the city contains a "million of inhabitants," and that there are other millions in its vicinity. Indeed there are several towns included in one, comprising what is called Súchau. First the city proper, inclosed with high walls which are about ten miles in circumference. Second, the suburbs, which are four distinct towns, especially one in the west part,[55] which is about ten miles in length and nearly the same in breadth, and is separated from the city proper by the great imperial canal. Third, the population residing on the water which is very numerous.
>
> . . . Having entered by the eastern gate, he [i.e. Isidore Hedde, a French commercial delegate] passed out through the famous western gate,[56] and visited there the most interesting part of Súchau, the focus of Chinese industry. (Op.cit. 585)

Even at the end of the Qing period when Shanghai by many measures had quickly surpassed Suzhou, the latter's business or wealth was not sucked away. Hampden C. du Bose, who lived in Suzhou through the last of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of this century, describes in his *A Handbook to Soochow* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1911) the elegant mansions of the rich, and tells about the cultivation of the Suzhou people, their refined tastes in rich dress and delicate foods. By noting the great accumulations of capital in the local silver shops and native banks, he sees clearly that the basis of this wealth was the amazingly productive rice culture of the Lower Yangzi delta, coupled with the skills of weavers and artisans, and the entrepreneurial acumen of the businessmen. (Mote 1973:45-8) The opening lines of du Bose's book, written in 1911, run:

> On the banks of the Grand Canal eighty miles west of Shanghai, twelve miles east of the Great Lake [Tai], and forty miles south of

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55 By this the author must have been referring to the west suburbs of Suzhou, the commercial centre of the Jiangnan region during the late imperial period.

56 This must have been Chang Gate, the northern gate in the west wall.

> the Yangtze, stands a far-famed city, the silk metropolis of the Orient. Even in this hurried twentieth century a crowd of admirers stands with reverent awe around the statue of antiquity, and gazes upon its towering heights, which seem to pierce the clouds. (Op.cit. 45)

It is very likely that, by "the statue of antiquity," the author refers to the seventy-six metres tall pagoda, located within the precincts of the large Buddhist temple compound called Baoen Si 報恩寺, popularly known as North Temple (Bei Si 北寺), in the north part of the city. Again, canals and bridges cannot but be emphasised:

> Our city stands upon the great artificial highway of the Empire, the Grand Canal, which is from fifty to one hundred yards wide and is spanned by magnificent stone arches - one of these bridges, near Soochow [i.e. Suzhou], has fifty-three arches[57] - and when on this great stream the white sails of the junks and small craft are spread to the winds, and the trackers along the path are towing in the opposite direction, it is a beautiful sight. In regard to inland navigation, Soochow is at the hub, and from it great and wide canals diverge as spokes in every direction, each of these being, as the Chinese boatmen say, "a centipede," from the innumerable streams diverging to the right and left, so there is not a city or town or village or hamlet which cannot be reached by boat in this well-watered plain, so inviting to the itinerant. (Op.cit. 47)

Yet du Bose is so amazed by the pagoda that he regards it as "the glory of the capital [of Jiangsu]." "Stand near it," he exclaims, "and behold one of the great wonders of the world! Count the stories, note the verandahs, see the doors, as so many pigeon-holes, and men as pigmies on those giddy heights!" Then he does not hesitate to spend a long passage describing the architectural and decorative details of this huge structure. Mote (op.cit. 45) is right in noting that this American was indeed a perceptive observer, because on the top of the pagoda, one could have a perfect overview of the entire city and what lay beyond:

> Walk around these porches; see the city lying at your feet; the Dragon Street running south to the Confucian Temple; the busy north-west gate; the pile of buildings constituting the City Temple; the Great Lake to the west; the range of hills and the picturesque pagodas that crown the jutting eminences [sic]; the plain dotted every fourth mile with hamlets. See the pagoda to the south, - it marks the city of Wukiang [i.e. Wujiang]. Follow the Shanghai canal glistening in the sunlight to the east till your eye rests on a hill, - that is Quensan [i.e. Kunshan]. At the foot of that mountain, thirty miles to the north-east, is Changsoh [i.e. Changshu], a city

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57 This bridge is called Baodai Qiao 寶帶橋. First built in 806, it is located about three kilometres south of the city of Suzhou. It is mentioned by Laurence Oliphant (1970:212-3) who, being told that the bridge had ninety arches, correctly counted fifty-three himself.

> of 10,000 inhabitants. Look north-west up the Grand Canal, thirty miles, - that is Mount Wei-ts'ien. There is Wusih [i.e. Wuxi], with a population of 150,000, and within this radius of thirty miles are one hundred market towns of from one thousand to fifty-thousand inhabitants and probably 100,000 villages and hamlets - five millions within the range of vision! (Op.cit. 48)

Du Bose does not mention the west suburb outside Chang Gate, because this once prosperous area had never recovered from the devastation brought about fifty years previously by the wars of Taiping rebellion.

Tradition holds that the Wu 吳 capital at the site of present-day Suzhou was founded in 514 B.C., and that, twenty-four years later, the Yue 越 capital was constructed at the site of present-day Shaoxing. Both events occurred at the time of Confucius when philosophical expositions and disputes amongst various schools of thinking were about to begin. Pervasive ancestor worship appears to have long been the main religious orientation, though this worship existed in constant interplay with concerns about spirits of rivers, mountains, earth, wind, rain, heavenly bodies, and about Heaven (Tian 天)[58] which was supremely powerful over both the divine realm and the human world. (Schwartz 1985:20-30) On the basis of such religious orientation and contemporary political demands was formulated a whole set of institutionalised rituals concerning various activities, including urban planning and construction imbued with the ancient conception of the relationship between Man and Nature. The cosmological symbolism in the foundation of the Wu capital, and, to a lesser degree, in that of the capital of Yue as Wu's rival state, was seen as expressive of the ambitions of the king of Wu in the struggle for hegemonic power during the Spring and Autumn period. This chapter focuses on the recorded construction and the city form of the state capital of Wu at the end of the sixth century B.C. when it was known as Helü Dacheng 闔閭大城.

The chapter is divided into six sections. First, I identify the problems concerning the source for the examination of the earliest city, and indicate the methodological orientation of this particular chapter. The second section presents a general description of some of the conventions of city construction in Central China in the Shang and early Zhou, and the principles of city planning prescribed in the *Zhou Li*. It serves as a theoretical background for city building activities against which the construction of the Wu capital was recorded. Third, I deal with three aspects of the recorded building of the Wu capital city: (1) the choice of site; (2) the possible configuration and measurements of the city; and (3) the disposition of its principal structures. In the fourth section, I concentrate on the cosmological symbolism seen as manifested in the building of the city walls and moats, which discussion is supplemented with consideration of a few aspects of the capital of Yue. Because of the importance attached to city gates in Chinese urban history and of the

58 Tian in the Zhou appears to have been fairly parallel to Di 帝, Shangdi 上帝 in the Shang 商. For an extensive discussion of the origin of Tian, see Creel 1970:493-506.

particularly extensive literary accounts of the city gates of Suzhou, I pay special attention to them in the fifth section of this chapter, in which their cosmological, political and legendary significance is examined. The main points covered in the chapter are summarised in the sixth and final section.

2.1 SOURCES AND APPROACH

This chapter, unlike the chapters that follow, does not present a historical study of the city at its earliest construction. Instead, it aims at formulating the *conception* of its urban form and symbolism which had, by the Eastern Han period, accumulated and was fairly systematised. This methodological orientation is determined by two salient features in the sources presently available to us. The first is the lack of archaeological evidence. The only material which can be regarded as of primary relevance for the study of urbanism in ancient times, as Wheatley (1971:135) states when discussing the cities of the Zhou period, is properly attested archaeological evidence, while the transmitted texts must be considered as of only secondary importance. In these circumstances, it is very unfortunate that archaeological discoveries pertaining to the Zhou era are scarce in the extreme. The study of the Wu capital seems to be in a similar situation. One of the reasons for this turns out to be that the site of the capital has most probably been occupied successively by the dynastic and present-day city (see Chapter Four) and has thus been damaged and reconstructed again and again. Another related reason may lie in the ephemeral building materials applied in almost all Chinese city construction, which could easily be destroyed by wars and fires. Thus archaeological investigation is often limited to chance exposures revealed during construction work, and some remaining pieces of past dynasties have been excavated from 6-7 layers of a rubble seam of 3-4m in thickness beneath the present ground surface of the city. (TDCGJ 1982:52) Consequently, an examination of this city has to rely more or less only on the traditional written information.

The second feature is that, to my knowledge, the earliest documents providing relatively extensive and systematic information are the *Yue Jue Shu* and the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* both written in the Eastern Han period,[59] more than half a millennium that is after the events to which I am referring. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish

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59 For a bibliographical guide to these two documents, see Lagerwey 1993, and Schuessler and Loewe 1993.

the authentic accounts of the city's construction as historical fact from amendments or even concoctions. Changes to these texts may have taken place partly through unconscious processes natural to the passage of time, and partly through historiographical editing and exegesis not only designed to afford support for later value systems and moral judgements, but also reflecting the cosmological synthesis of the particular time. Serious problems would then ensue in a historiographical approach to the early history of the city's building: for example, how can later accounts be used to re-construct the form of the city, and how can the particular way in which the city form was symbolically perceived at the time of the building be identified?

It is because of these two features that this chapter does not aim at examining what Helü Dacheng was in physical reality, or how and to what extent the history of its earliest building was devised by the author of the Eastern Han documents. Instead, it demonstrates what was perceived of the city as revealed in this earliest, systematised version of its beginning. A few suggestions only are randomly made on the possible origins of some of its elements. This orientation of the study is justified by the context of the present research, its main purpose being to sketch a number of important features of urban transformation in pre-modern China. It is evidenced by all the local gazetteers and many other documents produced in subsequent history that this earliest version was traditionally accepted through the ages. It constitutes an archetypal construct which has been transmitted from the remote past, and can therefore be regarded as a conceptual beginning of the city. The authority of the past has been a more cumulative phenomenon for the Chinese who have possessed a particularly strong sense of continuing tradition. Whatever the authenticity of this version may prove to be, it later came to be viewed as a source of historical authority and continued to inform the city's further development. After all, "history," as Sivin (1995:6) indicates, "unlike science, is not the study of physical things, but of how human beings conceive them."

2.2 TRADITIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF CITY BUILDING IN CENTRAL CHINA

According to the traditionally received literary accounts of ancient Chinese history and archaeological discovery, Helü Dacheng was probably the first city (in the proper sense of the word) to be constructed in the south-east region, and other large settlements there can only be regarded as no more than garrisons or

strongholds. Yet the building of this city in the late sixth century is not to be seen as an isolated event of the state of Wu, but as one which took place in the contemporary socio-political context of the whole of China; nor are the practice and ideas revealed in it to be separated from the traditions of city planning and construction which, by that time, had evolved for nearly two thousand years. Moreover, the earliest accounts of the event in the Eastern Han documents that are extant must have been produced in the social and theoretical context of the time of the writing. Thus, in this section, I first describe a few aspects of city building in the Shang and early Zhou as revealed in some ancient documents. Then I discuss the canonical principles of city planning recorded in the *Zhou Li* and, in particular, its last section, "Kaogong Ji." These principles not only reveal a considerable body of lore, practices and ideas connected with city building accumulated by the end of the Warring States, but are strongly characteristic of the Han synthesis.

2.2.1 Literary Records of City Building in the Shang and Early Zhou

The activity of city construction during Shang times (*c.* 16th-11th centuries B.C.) is mainly revealed to us in the "Pan Geng 盤庚" section of the *Shang Shu*. The legendary transference of the Shang capital was allegedly led by King Pan Geng, one of the ninth-generation descendants of the dynastic founder Tang 湯, and was a move from the site of Yan 奄 (at present-day Qufu 曲阜) to Yin 殷 (at present-day Anyang 安陽), as a measure in defence of royal authority against the power of rebel nobles and natural calamities. Since the populace were not content with the prospect of the change, he had to vindicate the decision. "Since the people cannot help each other to live," he said, "The [tortoise] oracle has been taken [to enquire about the transference], and the answer is as I intend to do." (*Shang Shu*, vol. 9: "Pan Geng," A) After he had established the city and settled on the new site, he again admonished his subjects, "The decision was made with the best advice [among many pieces of advice]. [Moreover] we all dare not disobey the oracle, and so we have to enlarge [this enterprise] on a grand scale." (Op.cit. C) Even the divinatory verdict seems to have been insufficient to convince the populace, as Pan Geng further resorted to the authority of the High God and the meritorious deeds of the former kings to determine the kingdom's fate. (Op.cit. A and B) The utmost concern for the sacrality of the site of the capital, the pivot of the kingdom, reveals what Wheatley (1971:444) has summed up, "The location of the capital, that point of absolute reality about which the world revolved, was intimately connected with the welfare of the kingdom, so that its precise siting was a matter of extreme concern."

Much richer literary information about city building in the early Western Zhou (*c.* 1040-770) period can be extracted from documents such as the *Shang Shu*, *Shi Jing*, and *Yi Zhou Shu*. Before the time of King Wu 武 (*c.* 11th century B.C.), the Zhou tribe had experienced at least five transferences of their main settlements, among which two are the most significant. One was from the site at Tai 邰 to Bin 豳, led by the legendary leader Gong Liu 公劉. This event is depicted in the ode *Gong Liu*, (*Shi Jing*, vol. 17-3: "Da Ya") with reference to the proper surveying of the site, including measuring the shadows of the sun to decide the position and boundaries of the new settlement, and examining its *yin-yang* 陰陽 phenomena and water system. If this transference marks the beginning of the Zhou's growth, the other one laid the foundation for it later to usurp the power of the Shang over the whole of central China, and is recorded in the ode *Mian* 綿 (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-2 "Da Ya") which contains much information about the construction of the new settlement. There it is recounted that Gugong Danfu 古公亶父, great-grandfather of King Wu, led his people, who had previously lived in loess caves, to the foot of Mt. Qi 岐 on the north bank of the River Wei 渭:

> The plain of Zhou was wide and fertile,
> Even the bitter plants were [sweet] as maltose.
> So he discussed and devised a scheme with his followers,
> And he further notched our tortoise-shell;
> The oracle indicated that this was the place and time to remain,
> And the houses could be built here.

Then he called in his builders and ordered the construction. "Dead straight was the plumb line," and they used the pounded-earth method to build the walls of the first building mentioned in the ode - the Ancestral Hall. Then came the work of building the inner and outer city gates. Finally they raised a great earth-mound as the Altar to the God of the Earth, where people were to worship before any important event.

King Wen 文, father of King Wu, after the conquest of the Li 黎, Yu 邘 and Chong 崇 tribes, moved his capital south-east across the River Wei to Feng 豐. Whereas the absence of any mentioning of divination before its establishment as a capital in the ode *Wenwang Yousheng* 文王有聲 (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-5 "Da Ya") leads to speculation that it may have been a pre-existing city conquered by the Zhou, (Wright 1977:35) this event is still significant in that the city moats are alleged to have been built in co-ordination with the city walls:

> King Wen received the mandate [of Heaven],

And thus rendered such meritorious deeds:
After conquering the Chong tribe,
He established his [capital] city at Feng.
. . .
He constructed the city walls and moats,
In a way that the scale was in accordance with the appropriate standard.[60]
For he was not impetuous to realise his personal desire,
But following the filial deeds [of his predecessor].
. . .
The King's enterprise was splendid indeed.
For he [further] built the walls [surrounding the palace] within the capital,
Where [the hearts of the peoples of] the four quarters inclined to,[61]
And the King here set the rules and principles.
The King's merit was splendid indeed!

Moreover, Feng may have had a *lingtai* 靈臺[62] and *biyong* 辟雍[63], both of which

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60 In its size the capital was larger than those of the enfeoffed princes and dukes, but smaller than that of the Son of Heaven, although, as the commentators noted, King Wen had received the mandate from Heaven, and, following the behest of his predecessor, desired to enhance the Zhou's dynastic enterprise. See *Shi Jing*, vol. 16-5: "Da Ya": "Wenwang Yousheng" with Mao 毛 (Western Han), Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (A.D. 127-200) and Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 (574-648) commentaries.

61 My interpretation of this stanza is somewhat different from that which Wheatley (1971:430 and 463 note 67) assumes: "The walls of Feng were where the cardinal directions conjoined [i.e., at the axis of the world]"; and also from Waley's: "Within the walls of Feng/All the peoples came together", and Karlgren's: "The walls of Feng were where (the peoples of) the four quarters came together." (Ibid.) There is actually a strong moral sense in the ode, as represented, for example, in the use of the phrases of sheer eulogy on the Kings' (Kings Wen and Wu) meritorious deeds. As Zheng and Kong commented, once the palace was constructed, the peoples then knew that there was now a king properly established towards whom they could turn. (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-5: "Da Ya": "Wenwang Yousheng" with Mao, Zheng and Kong's commentaries) Even the same phrase occurring again in the following stanza does not seem to support Wheatley's assumption, for it should be understood as, "The River Feng flowed to the east, [representing] a meritorious deed of Yu 禹, [to which should be attributed] the inclination [of the hearts of the peoples] of the four quarters to [the place where King Wen and Wu resided]." In other words, the later achievements of Kings Wen and Wu were really regarded as the continuation of those pioneered by Yu. (Ibid.) The following stanza after that however clearly vindicates this explanation, "A *biyong* 辟雍 was then built [by King Wu] in the capital at Hao, [consequently, adoring the proper rituals performed at the *biyong*, the peoples] from the west and the east, and from the south and the north, were not without heartfelt conviction and obedience." (Ibid.) Thus, the emphasis of this statement is not on the physical but on the ethical aspect which, of course, inevitably and significantly conveys a strong implication of cosmic centrality.

62 Zheng Xuan explains, "The gods' sagacity and brightness are called *ling* 靈; what is square and uplifted is called *tai* 臺." (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-5: "Da Ya": "Ling Tai" with Zheng's commentary) He Xiu 何休 (A.D. 129-182) indicates, "It is the *li* 禮 [lit. 'proper ritual'] that the king has a *lingtai* so that he can observe Heaven and Earth." (*Gongyang Zhuan*, vol. 9: "Duke Zhuang 31st Year" with He's commentary)

63 The *biyong* was a sacred place where the sons of the Zhou royal house were trained

are characteristic of cosmo-magical functions. (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-5: "Da Ya": "Lingtai") King Wu, who succeeded King Wen, built another capital at Hao 鎬, to the east of the River Feng 灃. In the same ode, we read:

> He who took the omens was King Wu,
> He took up his residence in the capital [called] Hao.
> It was the tortoise[-shell] oracle which decided the matter,
> And it was King Wu accomplished the enterprise.

Further details are few, except on the construction of a *biyong*.

The most historically important of the Zhou documents relating to records of city building are the two sections in the *Shang Shu*, namely the "Shao Gao 召誥" and the "Luo Gao 洛誥," with a little auxiliary information also being revealed in the "Kang Gao 康誥" section. They show not only the precedent for establishing capitals in conquered country as a means of controlling both territory and people, but also the procedure of founding a city, and in more detail. After quelling a Shang rebellion and pacifying the state,[64] the Duke of Zhou (Dan 旦), in the seventh year of his regency, had to begin the consolidation of power over the whole territory, especially over the regions occupied by the Shang people. The introduction to the Shao Gao section records, "King Cheng 成 was then residing at Feng 豐, and intending to build a new capital at Luo 雒.[65] Therefore he sent the Duke of Shao 召 to survey and divine the place." (*Shang Shu*, vol. 15: "Zhou Shu": "Shao Gao") For the convenience of this discussion, we may bring together all the information provided in those sections of the *Shang Shu* in Table 2-1 in a chronological order. This sequence adds

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in the accomplishments of manhood. Its name came from the round shape of the water-surrounded building (or complex) resembling a *bi* 璧 - round jade. As Ban Gu 班固 (A.D. 32-92) explained, "*Bi* 辟 implies the round jade [*bi* 璧]. Since it takes the round shape of the jade and is standardised with statutory rules, with water flowing by its sides, it symbolises the prevalence of the moral teaching." (*Baihu Tong Yi*, vol. A: "Biyong")

64 This is also known as the "second conquest of Shang". The revolt was allegedly led by the brothers of King Wu, Guanshu 管叔, Caishu 蔡叔 and Zhaishu 翟叔 who united with the Shang prince Wugeng 武庚 against the Duke of Zhou (Dan 旦). Wheatley (1971:107-108) suggests that there is reason to question the received version of this Zhou conquest, including the role played by the Duke of Zhou.

65 There were at the time two cities constructed to the north of the River Luo. One was Wangcheng 王城, to the west of the River Chan 瀍, which was regarded as the eastern capital at the time of King Cheng, and later used by King Ping 平 (770-720 B.C.) as his capital; the other, Chengzhou 成周, built to the east of the River Chan to house the population of the old Shang capital, later became a capital during the reign of King Jing 敬 (519-476 B.C.). It is suggested by CY (II, 1980:1186 in the entry on Chengzhou, and III, 1981:1783 in the entry on Luoyi 雒邑 and especially 2044 in the entry on Wangcheng) that the Duke of Shao was commissioned to build the former, and the Duke of Zhou to build the latter.

Table 2-1 The recorded chronological process of founding the cities at Luo in *c.* 11th century B.C.

Morth/date (Lunar calender)	Important Events
02/21 *yiwei* 乙未	The king travelled from the capital of Zhou and reached Feng. The Great Protector (Duke of Shao) preceded the Duke of Zhou (Dan) to inspect the site at Luo.
03/02 *bingwu* 丙午	The new moon appeared.
03/05 *wushen* 戊申	The Great Protector arrived at Luo in the morning and took the tortoise oracle for a bearing on the site. When he had obtained the oracle which revealed auspicious signs, he planned and laid out the city.
03/07 *gengxu* 庚戌	The Great Protector led all the people of Yin to mark out on the ground the foundations of the main establishments of the city and to begin work on the main public emplacements in the north (loop) of the River Luo.
03/11 *jiayin* 甲寅	The preliminary work on the main public emplacements was completed.
03/12 *yimao* 乙卯	In the morning the Duke of Zhou arrived at Luo to inspect the construction progress. He also grandly surveyed the eastern lands in order to found a capital. He took the oracle concerning the region of the River Li 黎 to the north of the Yellow River, then the oracle concerning the region east of the River Jian 澗 and west of the River Chan 瀍, but it was the region of Luo that was commanded. Again he took the oracle about the region east of the River Chan, but again it was the region of Luo that was commanded. Then he sent a messenger to take a plan to the king and to present the auspicious oracles.
03/14 *dingsi* 丁巳	The Duke of Zhou offered a sacrifice of two oxen to Heaven on the outskirts of the city which was to be built.
03/15 *wuwu* 戊午	The Temple of the Earth was built, as also were the Five Temples of Ancestors. A sacrifice was offered to the God of Earth of one ox, one sheep and one pig.
03/21 *jiazi* 甲子	In the morning the Duke of Zhou promulgated the decree in writing for the construction of the new city to the populace of the Yin and to the heads of all the fiefs, who concurred strongly and assembled for the corvée. The construction then started.
03/the end of the month	King Cheng arrived personally to inspect the progress of the construction.* The Duke of Zhou worshiped King Wen and King Wu in their temples with the wine of *panicum miliaceum* brought there with King Cheng.
04/13 *bingxu* 丙戌	King Cheng returned to the capital and counselled his young princes and dukes.#
12/12 *wuchen* 戊辰	King Cheng offered the winter sacrifice (*zheng* 烝) to King Wen and King Wu and ordered his official who was in charge of archives to read out the worship oration in which the decision about the Duke of Zhou's stationing at Luo was included. King Cheng then worshiped other gods in the first Ancestral Temple with animals and wines. The construction of the cities at Luo was finished.

* Cf. Bronze inscriptions on the Defang vessel (*defangding* 德方鼎). (Ji 1988:49-50)

\# Cf. Bronze inscriptions on the He vessel (*hezun* 何尊). (Ji 1988:50)

(Source: *Shang Shu*: "Zhou Shu," vol. 14: "Kang Gao," and vol. 15: "Shao Gao" and "Luo Gao;" *Yi Zhou Shu*, vol. 5: "Zuo Luo," no. 48. By reference to Ji 1988:49-50, note 5)

substantially to what can be learned from legendary accounts. The recorded rituals and building procedure are very possibly a blend of Zhou and Shang conventions, as Arthur Wright (1977:37) maintains, with some of the new elements of symbolism and ritual being almost certainly of Shang origin, as indicated in the Duke of Zhou's speech where he says that "the rites of the Yin 殷 were followed." (*Shang Shu*, vol. 15: "Zhou Shu": "Luo Gao") Wright (ibid.) has also summarised the elements appearing for the first time in an account of such an event:

> First, the city was pre-planned, and the plan was reduced to written form. Second, the proposed city was staked out on its site according to the plan. Third, when this had been completed, there were two sets of animal sacrifices. One set - probably to Heaven and the Chou [Zhou] primordial ancestor - took place at the altar outside the limits of the planned city, whereas the other set - fertility sacrifices - took place at the earth-mound that had been raised within. Fourth, the labour force was charged in advance with specific parts of the work.

The symbolism of the centre is more explicit here, as in a report said to have been made by the Duke of Shao to King Cheng:

> The King now comes and assumes responsibility for the work of the High God and himself serves at the centre of the land. Dan [the Duke of Zhou] said, "This great city has been constructed so that it is in correspondence to August Heaven [in order for the King to rule the world]. He shall scrupulously sacrifice to the upper and lower [i.e. heaven and earth], and govern at this central pivot of the land. [To govern in this way] The King obtains the mandate from Heaven, and the people enjoy a peaceful life." ("Shao Gao")

The Duke of Zhou, as he finished the construction of the city, reiterated this matter of the centripetal symbolism of the royal presence, and of the capital city in which that symbolism could be made manifest: "It can be said that, since ruling from this centre of the land, and the myriad states thus enjoying virtue and peace, you, the King, will achieve complete success." ("Luo Gao") The centrality of the capital, as Wheatley (1971:430) has stressed, related to existential and, of course, cosmic space, rather than to geometrical space.

2.2.2 The *Locus Classicus*

On the authenticity and date of the *Zhou Li*, Arthur Wright (1977:46) holds that, "whereas some passages, or their underlying ideas, may be of early date, the basic structure - and particularly the numerical-symbolic references - date from about the time of Han Wu-ti [i.e. Wudi 武帝, 156-87 B.C.]." There is little doubt at

present that the *Zhou Li* was not known before the Western Han. (Boltz 1993:24-5) It gives an elaborately laid out and detailed description of what purports to be the governmental and administrative structure and organisation of the royal Zhou. Yet it is of utmost importance to note with Wright (ibid.) that, since the text as it now stands was arranged, interpolated, and partly invented by the architects of the Han syncretic ideology and cosmology, it is normative and prescriptive, not historical. The *locus classicus* for the ideal layout of the Zhou capital city is the "Kaogong Ji" 考工記 section. This section was thought by Jiang Yong 江永 (1681-1762) to be a work of the late Warring States period, compiled by a person from the state of Qi 齊. It was substituted for the original sixth and last section on "Dongguan" 冬官 (lit. "Winter Offices") which had already been lost at the time when the *Zhou Li* first became known in the Western Han. (Boltz, ibid.) For the convenience of the present discussion, I shall classify the characteristic features of the principles of city building prescribed in the "Kaogong Ji," into four categories, namely, choice and preparation of the site, cardinal orientation, city layout, and disposition of principal structures.

2.2.2.1 Choice and preparation of the site

Ideally, the city has to be at the centre of the land. The precise position of this cosmic pivot should be calculated, as explained in the *Zhou Li* ("Diguan Situ," no. 2: vol. 10: "Da Situ"), by the official known as the Da Situ 大司徒, with the gnomon shadow template (*tugui* 土圭), the length of the gnomon being one *chi* 尺 five *cun* 寸:

> [The Da Situ,] with the *tugui* method, measures the length of the sun's shadow on the earth [*tushen* 土深]. [He] seeks [the place where] the sun's shadow [*riying* 日景] stretches in the true north and equals the gnomon in length, so as to find the centre of the earth. . . . The centre of the earth is [that place where] the sun's shadow at the summer solstice is one *chi* five *cun*. [This is the place] where earth and sky meet, where the four seasons merge, where wind and rain are gathered in, and where *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 are in harmony. Therefore the myriad things are at peace. Thus [it is here that] the royal capital is to be built.

Wright (1977:47) holds that what is seen in the second half of this passage is an expression of the systematised organicism characteristic of Han Confucian ideology. It makes of a capital city a cosmic focal point - a centre from which the forces of nature may be adapted to or controlled in the interests of the whole realm. Here, the siting of a capital was seen, in Wright's (ibid.) words, "in relation to the forces of nature and to the hypostasized powers that govern all phenomena." It was at this

quintessentially cosmic pivot that the royal palace was raised, and at which resided the king, the Son of Heaven, who upheld and represented the harmony of macrocosm and microcosm. It was regarded as responsible for aligning the human realm with the moral patterns of the cosmos. Such emphasis was placed on this idea that each of the six sections of the *Zhou Li* - corresponding to Heaven, Earth and the four seasons - opens with the same following statements:

> It is the king alone who establishes the [capital of his] state, discerns the directions of the four quarters, and puts right the proper positions [of the Royal Palace and Ancestral Hall]; he gives to the city its principle layout and to the fields their proper divisions; he devises the offices and apportions their positions; so that the centre is established to which the people turns.

The centralism, as Wright (op.cit. 46) sees it, is clearly characteristic of Han ideology. It makes the capital the epicentre of an orderly spatial grid extending to the boundaries of civilisation. From this carefully determined site, the powers of cosmic order should spread outwards to the boundaries of the world, and the outwards degressive potentialities will be formed into a harmonious system and thus brought into full play.[66]

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66 This appears to be in line with the Chinese conception of civilisation that the Virtue of the Son of Heaven spreads out over the four quarters of the world, civilising the regions close by and gradually losing its effectiveness as it gets farther away from the centre. The ideal city was regarded as a cosmic centre that reproduced the order of the wider cosmos. In doing so, the capital city, where the king resided, linked Heaven and Earth. The royal capital, duplicating the cosmic order, drew forth the power of that order into the city and state on earth. Schwartz (1985:37) argues that, since the dominant religious orientations in ancient China had formed, in the first instance, a religious base for an extraordinary, powerful conception of universal kingship and, by extension, for the early emergence within the high culture of the concept of a total all-embracing social and cosmic order, it was then the person of the king who linked Heaven and Earth, and matters which had been divined before were now routinely in the power of the king to control. The ordered city expressive of his position at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy and as the pivot of the four quarters, ensured just rule, and likewise the just rule protected the ordered city and the cosmos it represented. This conception is clearly expressed in a passage in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* (vol. 17: no. 6 "Shen Shi") declaring that the Son of Heaven should be at the pivot of the concentric system:

> In antiquity, he who had come to rule selected the centre under Heaven to establish his state, then selected the centre of the state to establish his palace, and then selected the centre of the palace to establish the Ancestral Temple. The land of a thousand square *li* 里 under Heaven was regarded as a state, and therefore [it was] ruled at the pivot, and that is [the king's] duty.

This idea is epitomised in the *Meng Zi* (vol. 13A: "Jinxin" Section, A) which states that it should be the exemplary ruler's role "to stand in the centre under Heaven and stabilise the people within the four seas." In the ode *Min Lao* 民勞 (*Shi Jing*, vol. 17-4: "Da Ya") which was allegedly written by Duke Shaomu 召穆 to remonstrate sarcastically with King Li 厲 (?-828 B.C.) of Zhou upon his tyrannical government, we read,

Before any social activity is conducted, certainly including building a new city, or a transference of the capital, or even an alteration at the site of the capital, auguries should be taken by milfoil and then by tortoise-shell. (*Zhou Li*, "Chunguan Zongbo," vol. 24) The way of dealing with such matters should be in accordance with that adopted by the Former Kings. (Vol. 26: "Dashi") Once the site has been decided, the first step of the construction work is to survey the contours of the site by the use of plumb-lines and water levels at its four corners,[67] and then to grade the site to a level piece of ground, as recorded in the "Kaogong Ji" (vol. 41: "Jiangren"). This record is regarded by Wright (op.cit. 47) as "a straightforward description of procedures for preparing a building site that were no doubt of great antiquity."

2.2.2.2 Cardinal orientation

The orientation of the city to the four cardinal points is omnipresent in the construction of almost all the Chinese capitals. An ode (*Shi Jing*, vol. 3-1: "Yong Feng": "Ding Zhi Fangzhong") evokes the scene of the building of a new capital by the people of the state of Wei 衛 in 660 B.C. at the site called Chu 楚:

> When [the constellation] Ding 定[68] had attained the zenith,

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> The people are indeed heavily burdened
> And it is time for them to repose awhile.
> Show favour to this Central Kingdom [Zhongguo 中國]
> So as to placate the four quarters.

It was an attribute of the king to be at the centre; in turn, it was also an attribute of the centre to be occupied exclusively by the king.

67 The principle of the working of the water level device must have been similar to that of a spirit-level. According to Zheng Xuan and Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 of the seventh century A.D., both of whom commented on this passage, four plumb-lines were installed at the four corners of the site for the surveying of its contours.

68 The constellation Ding (the Pegasus α, β) is also known as Shi 室 or Yingshi 營室 which literally means "constructing buildings". Kong Yingda explained that as the constellation Ding reached the middle of the sky, it was at the middle of the tenth month when winter started and when it was the proper time for constructions; this is perhaps the reason for the constellation's having been named Yingshi. (*Shi Jing*, vol. 3-1: "Yong Feng": "Ding Zhi Fangzhong" with Zheng and Kong's commentaries) The ritually sanctioned season for the construction of a city, according to the "Yue Ling" 月令 section of the *Li Ji*, (vol. 16 and 17) was the second month of autumn (*zhongqiu zhi yue* 仲秋之月); and the repair of walls and gates was made in the first month of winter (*mengdong zhi yue* 孟冬之月). The coincidence of the timing of city construction and repair work with the relatively slack season in the farming year seems more than incidental, as Wheatley (1971:182-3) has suggested. Kong has explicitly explained elsewhere that any construction work should be accomplished in the interval between busy seasons in farming, and that even after the Winter Solstice, the coming year's farm work should be prepared and constructions should thus not be pursued any further. (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 10: "Duke

They began to build the Ancestral Hall at Chu.
When they had calculated [the cardinal orientations][69] by the sun,
They began to build the palaces and houses.

Wheatley (1971:423 and 425) has observed that whereas prominent among the morphological features which the ideal-type Chinese city shared with a majority of the great capitals of Asia were cardinal orientation, cardinal axiality, and a more or less square perimeter delimited by a massive wall, there was a difference of emphasis in one important feature of their plans. "In the Chinese city," he writes, "the main processional axis running from south to north, 'the celestial meridian writ small,' was of much greater significance than any avenue running from east to west." The preference of the south-north axiality may come on the one hand from the basic pragmatic requirement of buildings' southern exposure for biological reasons, which later gave rise to the general conceptual partiality of the Chinese for facing the south;[70] on the other, from the equatorial character of Chinese astronomy which concentrates attention on the Pole and circumpolar stars, as opposed to the ecliptic-emphasising nature of Greek and medieval European astronomy, and to that based on azimuth and altitude as practised by the Arabs. (Needham 1959:266-7) The concept is fairly clear, as recommended in the "Kaogong Ji" (vol. 41: "Jiangren"):

> They [the artificers] erect a post [at the centre of the levelled ground], taking the plumb-lines to ensure its verticality, and with it observe the sun's shadow [*ying* 景]. They take it as the determinator of the shadows of the sun at its rising and setting and discern their mid-point [indicating the true north]. In the day-time, they consult the sun's shadows at noon; in the night-time, they study the pole star, so that [the orientation of] true east and west, [and south and north] is precisely fixed.

The pole was connected therein with a background of microcosmic-macrocosmic thought, and thus corresponded to the position of the emperor on earth, around whom the vast system of the bureaucratic agrarian state naturally and spontaneously revolved. (Needham 1959:230) This was metaphorically stressed in a passage in the *Lun Yu* (vol. 2: "Weizheng"):

Zhuang 29th Year" with Kong's commentary) The proper or improper timing of constructions was in fact mentioned again and again in the records of such writings as the *Zuo Zhuan* (*passim*).

69 Cf. Zheng and Kong's commentaries.

70 Wheatley (1971:460-461 note 41) gives an interesting discussion on the symbolism of an ominous threatening north as opposed to a benign, auspicious south, which is assumed to have permeated Chinese culture.

> He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the pole star, which keeps its place while all the stars turn round it.

Since this earthly centre, as Diana Eck (1987:3) plainly puts it, reproduces the order of the wider cosmos, the city therefore draws forth the power of that order into the city and the kingdom of the earth. In this sense, the Son of Heaven throned facing southward, corresponding to the pole star which at the axis of the universe watched over the southerly world of men, ruled all the people on earth who "face the north to acknowledge their allegiance as his subjects" (*beimian chengchen* 北面稱臣).

2.2.2.3 City layout

The ideal layout of the city is summarised in the following passage of the "Kaogong Ji" (vol. 41: "Jiangren"):

> The artificers, as they built the capital, demarcated it as a square with sides of nine *li* 里, each side having three gateways. Within the capital there were nine meridional and nine latitudinal avenues, each of the former being nine chariot-tracks in width.

Whereas the problem of layout concerning the proportion of subdivision has evoked controversial speculations[71] which are shown in Figures 2-1, 2-2 and 2-3, there is no question but that this idealised urban plan relied on the same principle of subdivision as the old well-field (*jingtian* 井田) system of land

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71 The most representative of the traditionally received accounts of the ideal city layout advocated in the "Kaogong Ji" are the one in the *San Li Tu Jizhu* 三禮圖集注 by Nie Chongyi 聶崇義 in the mid-10th century, the one in the *Yongle Dadian* 永樂大典 completed in 1408, and the one in the *Kaogong Ji Tu* 考工記圖 by Dai Zhen 戴震 (1723-1777). Wheatley (1971:411 and 414) suggests that the text of the "Kaogong Ji" might have incorporated a confusion between the postulated nine meridional and nine latitudinal avenues of the city and the nine units of the well-field system, and thus that a group of four units fulfilling the role of the central tract occupied a quarter, rather than a ninth, of the total area which was subdivided into sixteen quarters, rather than nine. Yet in the "Kaogong Ji" we read: "the city was divided into nine parts, and the government into nine offices, with nine correspondent officials running the respective nine parts." By referring to this passage, He Yeju (1985:43-4 and 48-51) maintains that the city is subdivided into nine units, with the central tract - the palace complex occupying a ninth of the total area. He insists that the subdivision is realised by only two sets (1 set = 3 avenues) of meridional and latitudinal avenues, leaving the central meridional one as the main north-south axis and the central latitudinal one as an auxiliary axis. The proportion of the central tract, that is, the royal palace (*gong* 宮), to the area of the city (*cheng* 城), is explicitly indicated in the *Shang Shu Dazhuan* (vol. 3: "Wu Yi Zhuan") of the Han: "The *cheng* has sides of 9 *li*, and *gong* has sides of 3 *li*."

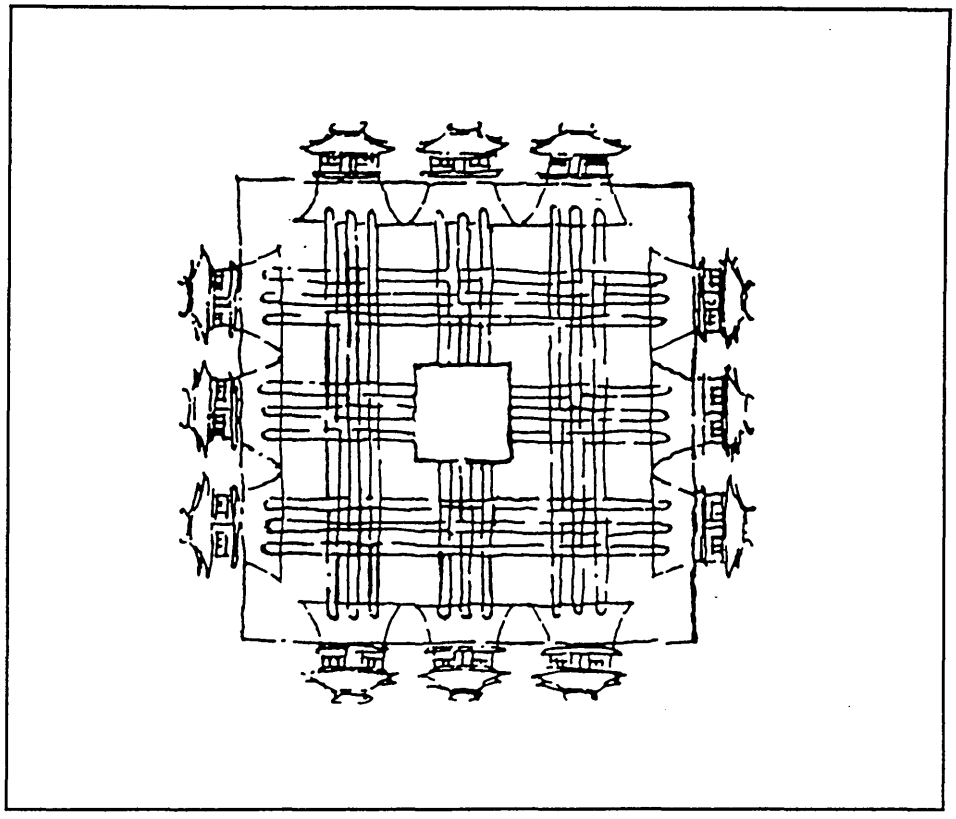

Figure 2-1 Canonical plan of the royal Zhou capital (Wangcheng) in the *Sanli Tu Jizhu.*

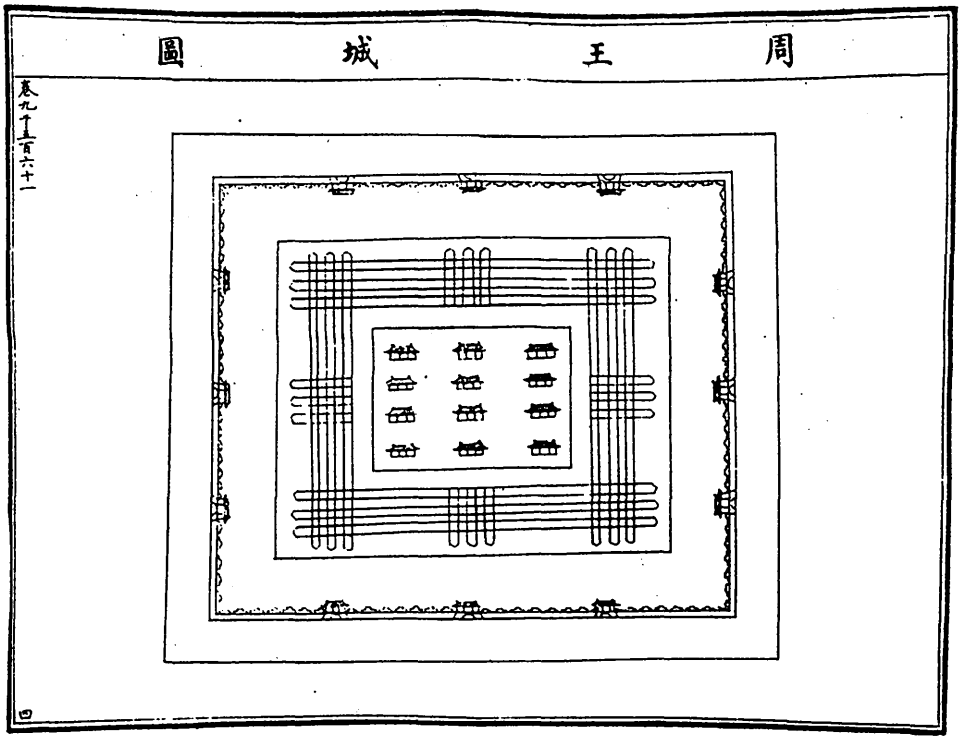

Figure 2-2 Canonical plan of the royal Zhou capital in the *Yongle Dadian*, vol. 9561.

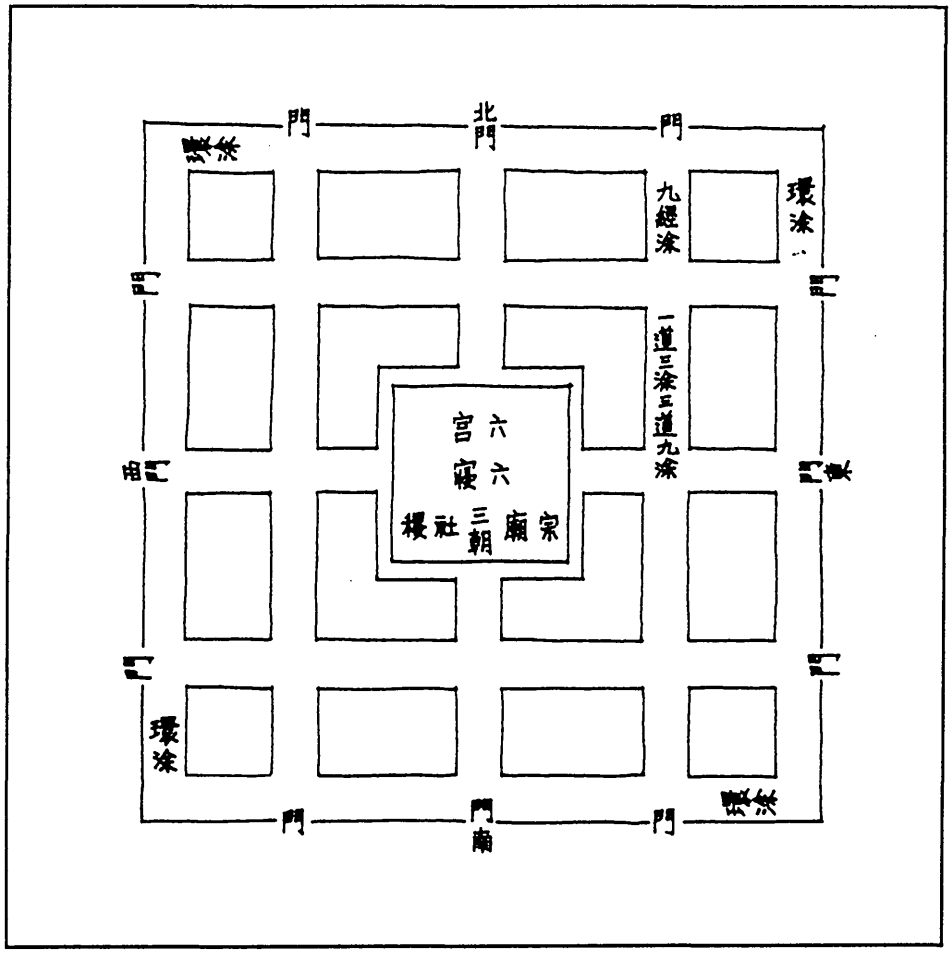

Figure 2-3 Canonical plan of the royal Zhou capital in the *Kaogong Ji Tu*.

settlement and cultivation, as Granet (1930:243-4) has noted.[72] This aspect might turn out, in cosmological terms, to have been more significant in the city as a microcosm and the very centre of the earth, than in the methodological application of the well-field system in city layout, in that the ruler of all-under-Heaven was expected to reside in a structure that was a symbol of the earth.

First, since the ancient Chinese perceived the earth as a square checkerboard, the form of a square was obviously taken to be a prerequisite for the general morphology of an ideal capital which would be a replica of the earth.[73] Second, and perhaps more profoundly, the layout of the city was analogous to the principle of the administrative subdivision of the royal territory and further to the conceptual subdivision of the whole world. According to the "Yu Gong" 禹貢 section of the *Shang Shu*, (vol. 6: "Xia Shu") which is presumed by Needham (1959:500) to be the oldest Chinese geographical document, Yu 禹, a legendary hero-emperor, divided the land of China into nine regions or nine provinces (*jiuzhou* 九州) after having mastered the waters. On the other hand, the Middle Kingdom (Zhongguo 中國, also denoting present-day China) was thought to hold a place of but the central one of the nine greater regions of the whole world, called Da Jiuzhou 大九州 (lit. "the Great Nine Regions").[74] It is therefore reasonable to think of the city which was subdivided into nine units with the royal palace in the centre, as a microcosm embedded in a concentric system, from the Chinese empire up to the scale of the whole world, on the pivot of which resided the Son of Heaven. The third significance lies in the network of the well-field system into which the capital city is embedded. The capital (*guo* 國) was constructed in such a symbolic way that the grid scheme of its subdivision and the units of its measurement were identical with those of the

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72 Balazs (1964:68) explicitly speaks of the "rural origin" of such spatial organisation. For discussions of the well-field system, see Granet 1930:149-50; Wheatley 1971:132-4 and 205 note 115 and He 1985:39-42. Those discussions are mainly based on the descriptions in the *Meng Zi*, vol. 5: "Tengwen Gong," A, and in the *Zhou Li*: "Diguan Situ," no. 2: vol. 11: "Xiao Situ" and vol. 15: "Suiren."

73 The assumption of "heaven round, earth square" (*tianyuan difang* 天圓地方) is of great antiquity. It was, for example, expounded in the *Huainan Zi* and some other writings, and incorporated in one of the ancient astronomical theories, that of the Gai Tian 蓋天 school. (For an introduction to and discussion of the school, cf. Needham 1959:212-3; Yang 1987:352)

74 *Shi Ji*, vol. 74: "Meng Zi Xun Qing Liezhuan." Zou Yan 鄒衍 (*c.* 305-240 B.C.) refers to the Middle Kingdom by the name the "Spiritual Region of the Red Continent" (Chixian Shenzhou 赤縣神州). Thus the area of China was also named the "Central Region" (Zhongzhou 中州) or the "Central Earth" (Zhongtu 中土). For a discussion of the cosmological significance of the idea of the Nine Provinces, see Henderson 1984:66-8.

country field (*ye* 野),[75] and the perspective of this checkerboard pattern radiated from the capital outwards, ideally in all directions to the frontiers of the world.

Wright (1977:48) argues that the systematic application to the city layout of the emblematic numbers is a product of the second half of the Western Han. Among them three, nine and twelve are particularly significant:

> Three because it represents the three sectors of the intelligible universe (heaven, earth, and man); nine because it represents three times three and is also the number that represents the ancient Chinese world (the nine provinces as established by the Emperor Yu); twelve because it is the sum of three and nine *and* [*sic*] the number of months in a year. Thus it follows that the ruler, who is seen by the Han theorisers as uniting in his person the three sectors of the universe and presiding over the nine provinces, during the sequence of twelve months in each year, should have the numbers three, nine, and twelve in the symbolism of his capital.

Here it seems worth emphasising yet another point, that is, the exclusive application of the number nine for the capital and of decreasing arithmetical progression for other cities in the hierarchical range. Odd numbers were regarded as of *yang* 陽, and nine, the largest of odd numbers, was the supreme *yang* number denoting Heaven and thus associated with the Son of Heaven. The fact, which must be shared by other civilisations, that the larger and higher the construction is, and consequently the higher number employed in it, the more noble and majestic it is considered to be rendered, (*Li Ji*, vol. 23: "Liqi," no. 10) was constitutionalised in detail as formal rituals (*li* 禮) in ancient China. (Cf. *Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 9 "Duke Zhuang 18th Year") The basic formula of this matter was recorded in the *Han Shu* (vol. 73: "Zhuan," no. 43: "Wei Xian"), "It is a matter of the *li* that from the higher to the lower [the number employed in any event] descends with a difference of two." In case of the city construction, a passage in the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 2: "Duke Yin 1st Year") explains:

> The walls of any state capital which exceed a hundred *zhi* 雉[76] [in circumference] constitute a danger to the state. According to the

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75 In the "Kaogong Ji" we read, for example, that "the market and the royal court of audience each occupies an area of one *fu* 夫," with Zheng Xuan and Jia Gongyan explaining, "each occupied one hundred square *bu* 步." This measurement is identical with that of the well-field system. (Cf. *Zhou Li*: "Diguan Situ," no. 2: vol. 11: "Xiao Situ" and vol. 15: "Suiren")

76 *Zhi* was an area unit for the measurement of city walls. One *zhi* equalled three *zhang* 丈 in length by one *zhang* in height.

> institutions of the former kings, the walls of a city of the first order must not exceed one-third the length of that of the capital, that of a second-order city one-fifth, and that of third-order city one-ninth.

This ritually classified order was also expressed in almost all other aspects of city construction, with the city of the Son of Heaven on the top of the hierarchy.

2.2.2.4 Disposition of principal structures

The "Kaogong Ji" (vol. 41: "Jiangren") states that the Ancestral Hall (*zu* 祖) shall be on the left, i.e. the east, and the Altar to the God of the Earth (*she* 社) on the right, i.e. the west.[77] This prescription, of course, takes the south-facing royal palace as at the centre and the point of reference. Thus the passage continues, "In the front [i.e. the south] is the Imperial Court [*chao* 朝], while at the back [i.e. the north] lies the market [*shi* 市]."

I have already mentioned the dominance of ancestor worship since the earliest known times of Chinese civilisation, and it is extremely possible, as Wright (1977:39) assumes, that the cult of ancestors is as old as Chinese culture itself. Thus we can see that the Ancestral Temple of the princely line (*zongmiao* 宗廟), wherein the commemorative tablets of the royal lineage were enshrined, with the high ancestor of the lineage as the focus of the cult, was a building of the highest importance in religious, political, diplomatic and military terms, and became a crucial criterion for a city or settlement to be regarded as a proper capital, as a passage in the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 10: "Duke Zhuang 28th Year") explicitly states:

> All *yi* 邑 ["settlements" or "capitals of fiefs/regions/estates"] having ancestral temples providing a lodging for their former rulers were designated *du* 都 [capital]; those without such a temple were termed *yi*. An *yi* is said to have ramparts made of beaten earth [*zhu* 築], a *du* is said to have city walls [*cheng* 城].

Many significant events had to be reported at the *zongmiao* in appropriate formulas, and an elaborate annual calendar of sacrifices was also formulated. This was regarded as necessary ceremony and etiquette in accordance with the *li*. (*Li Ji*, vol.

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77 He Yeju (1985:29, 48 and 57) suggests that the Ancestral Temple and the Altar to the God of the Earth were actually meant to be respectively on both the east and the west sides of the royal court of audience (*chao*) rather than of the royal palace. That is, they were in the south of the royal palace. This suggestion may have been drawn from the layouts of the later dynastic capitals, such as Nanjing in the Ming dynasty and Beijing in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

12: "Wangzhi," no. 5) The ritualised activities at the *zongmiao* are repeatedly recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*. (*passim*)

Another ubiquitous cult was that of the Altar to the God of the Earth (*she*) or the Gods of the Earth and Grain (*sheji* 社稷). For the Han synthesisers, the altar, laid with the soils of five colours symbolising the territories in the five directions (four quarters and centre), (*Yi Zhou Shu*, vol. 5: "Zuo Luo," no. 48) was always kept open

> To receive the hoar frost, dew, wind and rain, and to allow free access to the *qi* 氣 [lit. "cosmic breath"] of Heaven and Earth. Hence the extinguished state's *she* shall be roofed over so as for it not to receive the *yang* influence from Heaven. . . . Offering sacrifice to the God of the Earth is thus to praise the *Dao* 道 [lit. "Way"] of the sacred Earth. The Earth carries the myriad things, and the signs descended from Heaven. It is from the Earth that the myriad things are obtained [by men], and it is from Heaven that the order comes that is followed [by men]. Therefore [to offer sacrifice to the God of the Earth] is to show reverence for Heaven and to be on intimate terms with the Earth, and is to teach the people to remain in gratitude. (*Li Ji*, vol. 25: "Jiaotexing," no. 11)

Enfeoffment had to be carried out with a symbolical handful of earth taken from the part of the King's great altar with the relevant direction, just as in an event of such kind recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 25: "Duke Ding 4th Year"). Since the earth was of utmost importance to the state in every sense, the Altar to the God of the Earth, like the Ancestral Temple, functioned as one of the loci of the state's affairs. An annual calendar of sacrifices was elaborated, (*Li Ji*, vol. 15 "Yue Ling," no. 6) and it was at the Altar of the Earth that various important events started or ended. There, for example, the armies of a state sacrificed before the start of a campaign; there they presented captives and offered sacrifices after a victory; and there the ruler beat the drum or offered sacrifice when abnormal natural phenomena occurred. (*Zuo Zhuan*, *passim*) Hence it is not surprising that "the ruin of the Altar of Earth and Grain" was simply an expression designating the extinction of the state in question.

The positions assigned to both the Ancestral Temple and the Altar to the God of Earth were also believed to reflect a concept of the Zhou people. In the *Yi Zhou Shu* (vol. 3: "Wu Shen," no. 32) we read,

> The *Dao* of Heaven esteems the left [position], [hence] the sun and moon move westward. The *Dao* of Earth esteems the right

> [position], [hence] the waters flow eastward. The *Dao* of Man esteems the central [position], [hence] the ears and eyes serve the heart.[78]

The ancestors, on the one hand, like the father to his son, the husband to his wife, and the king to his subjects, are of *yang* character, and therefore analogous to Heaven.[79] They, on the other hand, with their previous meritorious and glorious deeds, obtained the Mandate of Heaven as the source of legitimate authority to rule the world, and thus were seen by their descendants as closely associated with Heaven.[80]

Both the Ancestral Temple and the Altar of the Earth and Grain were jointly regarded as the loci of the symbol of the continuing power of the state.[81] When the king of Yue recalled the total defeat that he suffered in the war in 493 B.C. against Wu and the devastation that his state had undergone, he said, "What Wu has done is immoral and evil. [They] maimed my Ancestral Temple, and razed my Altar of the Earth and Grain."[82] (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 10) The symbolic significance of these two cults for the city and state is more convincingly illustrated by an incident of 548 B.C. recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*, (vol. 36: "Duke Xiang 25th Year") which has come to epitomise the idealised proprieties of military conflict in those times, and

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78 See also the commentary by Jia Gongyan on the first sentence of the "Xiao Zongbo" section in the *Zhou Li*, "Chunguan Zongbo," no. 3: vol. 19.

79 The original meaning of the Chinese character *tian* 天 (later meaning "heaven" or "the sky"), according to Xu Shen's 許慎 (*c.* A.D. 58-147) definition, is man's head, or, in some circumstances his forehead or the top of his head. (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chaps. 1A and 9A) Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815) commented, ". . . it meant the top of a man, and was extended to connote all which were high. . . . Thus *tian* was also extended to indicate all occupiers of the superior position, such as the king compared to his subjects, the father compared to his sons, the husband compared to his wife, . . ." (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chap. 1A) This concept is scattered throughout ancient literature. Suffice it to give a few examples. For the line in the ode *Bai Zhou* 柏舟, (*Shi Jing*, vol. 3-1: "Yong Feng") "Oh, mother! Oh, *tian*!" Mao explains: "By *tian* was meant father;" for a line in another ode, *Dang* 蕩, (vol. 18-1: "Da Ya") "*Tian* grants the people of Yin[-Shang] arrogant and befuddled dispositions" he explains, "Here *tian* is the King;" and it is recorded in the *Yi Li*, (vol. 30: "Sangfu Zhuan") "The husband is his wife's *tian*."

80 This concept was omnipresent in ancient times. Cf. e.g. the odes *Wen Wang* 文王 and *Da Ming* 大明 in the *Shi Jing* (vol. 16-1 and 2: "Da Ya").

81 Granet (1930:241) holds that the two institutions were formerly one and the same.

82 A parallel, if not universal, concept has been revealed in the *Chronicum Laurissense breve*, written about 800, which says that in the course of one of his wars against the Saxons (772), Charlemagne destroyed the temple and the sacred wood of their "famous Irminsul" in the town of Eresburg. (Eliade 1959:35) This appears to correspond to the idea that, as the city was constituted ritually, it had a more than physical existence; when it was conquered, it had to be ritually unmade and disestablished, as Rykwert (1989:70-1) suggests, who also gives a number of such recorded events in the Roman world, ancient Greece and Shechem.

has been quoted by both Wheatley (1971:431) and Wright (1977:40). It tells how the conqueror of Chen 陳 was met at the royal court in the capital by the defeated ruler, wearing mourning, and his chief staff, who bore in their arms the image of the God of the Earth and the ritual vessels used in the Ancestral Temple. Referring to this record, Wheatley (1977:471) states,

> The event is probably apocryphal, and certainly archetyped [sic], but the implication is clear enough. When the invader received these two symbols, the guarantees respectively of sustenance and government, it signified that the entire state had passed into his hands.

The market was given the place of least honour and minimum *yang* influence, by being located in the northern extremity of the city, in contrast with the royal hall of audience which was in the south. The prescription of the layout of an ideal city reflects to a degree the value system of the pre-Han period, which was later fully elaborated by the Han Confucians. (Wright 1977:49) The market was highly supervised and controlled, according to the *Zhou Li*, ("Diguan Situ," no. 2: vol. 14: "Sishi") by the "market supervisor" (*sishi* 司市), the principle of this system lasting until the mid-Tang. Even though commerce was granted a rather low status in social life, in contrast with other matters in the city, the running of the market may still have reflected a typical Chinese attitude towards social life and the natural world; that is, to paraphrase Graham (1989:227 and 331), to treat opposites as complementary rather than conflicting. This attitude has been described so persuasively by Wright (ibid.) that I can do no better than quote his words.

> In another passage,[83] under the duties of the *nei-tsai* [*neizai* 內宰], the *Chou li* [*Zhou Li*] tells us that this official is to assist the empress in establishing a market, to attend to its layout and regulations, and then to dedicate it by the *yin-li* or female ritual. The commentary of Cheng Hsüan [Zheng Xuan 鄭玄] (2nd century A.D.) explains that in establishing the capital of a state the emperor builds the palaces whereas the empress establishes the market, and that this is to represent the harmonious complementarity of the male and female principles (*yang* and *yin*). That this ever happened is doubtful, to say the least, but the additional theorising tends to underscore the *yin* character of the market location in the classical plan.

One of the most notable and important features in the mode of the canonical disposition of these principal urban structures, and, indeed, in the whole set of city

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83 *Zhou Li*, "Tianguan Zhongzai," no. 1: vol. 7: "Neizai."

planning principles prescribed in the *Zhou Li*, ideal as they were,[84] is the proper, symbolic positioning of every physical element of the city, by reference to cardinal orientation with an emphasis on the south. It formed an order which was seen as durable because it was not arbitrary but based upon an understanding of Nature - the eternal standard. As the *Zhou Yi Qianzaodu*, (vol. A) possibly written in the first century B.C., expounds it,

> What does not change [in the universe] is the proper position of [each of the myriad things]. Heaven is above; Earth is below. The monarch faces south; the subjects face north. The father sits and the son prostrates himself. These are what do not change.

The canonised principles of city planning, as many other institutions of the state, were defined by defining the order of Heaven and Earth, to paraphrase Sivin (1995:18) who concisely interprets one of the passages on this point by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.).

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84 For all the practical reasons, the cities in Zhou times, according to archaeological evidence, turn out in greater or lesser degrees *not* to have been in compliance with the ideal form prescribed in the *Zhou Li*. (Cf. Wheatley 1971:135-50 figs. 10-12; Liu 1990:232-3 figs. 50-2) Pragmatic theories of city planning had also been developed by the end of the Warring States period, among which the most representative are found in the *Guan Zi*. (Vol. 1: "Cheng Ma" Section, no. 5 and vol. 5: "Ba Guan" Section, no. 13) This latter work advocates that the scale, size and name (title) of the city should be adjusted according to its population and the surrounding cultivated land it relies upon, rather than to its enfeoffed hierarchical title of enfeoffment only. As for the site and layout of the city, we read,

> To establish any state capital, it should either be built at the foot of a great mountain, or in a vast valley. If [the site] is on high land, dry lands should be avoided, so that adequate water will be available; if [the site] is on low land, excessive waters should be avoided, so that the draining ditches may be spared. Advantage should be taken of the natural conditions and resources. Therefore the inner and outer walls of the city need not follow the rigid rule, and its roads and streets need not be measured with the yardstick. (Vol. 1: "Cheng Ma" Section)

Whereas these expositions seem to have presaged the later urban development in the south of China, where the geographical conditions are much more complex than those in the North, they may prove to have been complementary ideas to the canonical principles of the early city form. From the philosophical point of view, does not this apparent contradiction of ideas reflect Graham's (1989:370) observation that "it is as though Chinese civilisation has been careful to preserve a certain latitude in the organisation of its cosmos, in order that throughout its long history originality and creativity should never die out"? In symbolic terms, however, the *Guan Zi* (vol. 18: "Duo Di" Section, no. 57) also expounds that "the Son of Heaven should reside at the centre."

2.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WU CAPITAL

A two-fold historic condition at the time of the building of the city should first be reiterated here. Whereas from the late sixth century B.C. on intensified contact between Wu and Central China introduced much Zhou high culture to these southern peripheral regions, Wu may still have preserved some aspects of local customs, with which the construction of its capital is very likely to have been imbued. One example of the local customs is the theme of the snake which pervaded myths, architectural decorative themes and the general tattoo pattern. On the other hand, the rulers of Wu, no longer seeing themselves as enfeoffed tribal groups with allegiance to the Zhou, took the title of king, and like other states and tribes, joined in the struggle for power that was taking place everywhere across the area of present-day northern and central China. The trend for princes and dukes of all states to reject the Zhou king's authority and ambitiously to seek hegemony over China, was visible in the construction of their capitals. Most capital city planning at that time exceeded the restrictions imposed by the Zhou's institutional rituals[85] (*jianyue* 僭越), which were intended to reflect the princes' and dukes' feudal rank and duty, and thus breached the once rigid regulations of the hierarchical system. Not only the qualitative aspects, such as the orientation and layout of the city, but also the quantitative aspects, such as the scale of the city and the symbolic number were applied to important urban structures. The construction of the Wu capital seems to have been viewed as no exception.

2.3.1 The Choice of Site

In the spring of 514 B.C., during the reign of King Liao 僚, a long pre-meditated palace coup known as the Event of "Zhuanzhu's 專諸 Assassination of King Liao", brought to power a new, ambitious king, Helü 闔閭.[86] At this time, the Wu capital was probably no more than a fortified centre for agricultural, military and perhaps ceremonial purposes, and its site had by now been changed several times. Although the exact locations of the capital are a matter of academic controversy, it seems certain, according to historical documents and the results of archaeological work, that the trend of the movement of the capital was south-eastward. (Shang

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85 For the restrictions in hierarchical order, cf. *Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 2: "Duke Yin 1st Year;" *Li Ji*, vol. 23: "Li Qi," no. 10. For a discussion of it, cf. He 1985:26-28.

86 In some other documents, the character 閭 is replaced by 廬. For the details of the event, see *Shi Ji*, vol. 31: "Wu Taibo Shijia;" *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 3: "Wangliao Shi Gongzi Guang Zhuan."

1988; Xiao 1988) Xiao Menglong (1988:28-30) suggests that there may have been two pragmatic reasons for the transference of the capital in this direction. One was considerations of military strategy. During the Spring and Autumn period, military conflicts were extremely frequent.[87] If the assumption that the city and state were practically and symbolically one[88] can only be applied to some of the smaller Chinese states, (Graham 1989:300) the idea of the city being regarded as stronghold for the state's defence may largely have reflected the reality at that time, as the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 52: "Duke Zhao 26th Year") indicates, "maintaining a capital is intended to protect the state." The strategic position of the capital then became a crucial criterion for the survival of the state.

In the area of the middle and lower reaches of the River Yangzi at that time stood the states of Chu, Wu and Yue, "like the legs of a tripod," with Chu being the strongest and Yue the weakest. In order for Wu to fulfil its ambition of defeating Chu in the west and conquering Yue in the south, different strategies had to be applied in confronting these two enemy states. On the one hand, the experience of the conflicts with Chu before the years of Helü proved that it would never easy for Wu to defeat this powerful neighbour which was in possession of a vast land and usually had preponderance over Wu. On the other hand, as Fan Li 范蠡 allegedly said,

> The *qi* 氣 ["cosmic breath"] of kingly hegemony is visible at [the area of] the Gate of Earth [*dihu* 地戶]. . . . the occupant of [the area of] the Gate of Earth must be either Wu or Yue."[89] (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 7)

Thus, Yue was regarded by Wu as "a serious disease in its vital organs." (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 5: "Fuchai Neizhuan") Consequently, the Wu capital was moved south-eastwards, further from Chu in the west but closer to Yue in the south, which geographically retained for Wu the option of either continuing to challenge and exhaust powerful Chu in the west whenever conditions were suitable, while avoiding

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87 There are, for example, a total of 483 military actions mentioned in the *Zuo Zhuan* which covers a span of about 240 years (starting from 722 B.C.). (He 1986:55)

88 Wheatley (1971:398) argues, "It follows from the functional criterion of urbanism adopted in this work that city and state were coeval, indeed the city was the organising principle of the state, and all generated cities were in their earlier phases city-states. . . . the process of crystallisation of urban forms at the same time brought into being the earliest state institutions."

89 In his bibliographical guide to the text of the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, Lagerwey (1993:473) writes:

> The very choice of venue was dictated by a pessimistic cosmological consideration; for the south-east is, in the words of the *Wu yüeh ch'un ch'iu*, the *ti hu* 地戶, the Door of the Earth, i.e. the cosmic drain.

a direct attack on it, or watching and menacing the weak but potentially dangerous Yue in the South in a most convenient way. (See Figure 1-2)

The other pragmatic reason was the need for the development of the economy of the state of Wu. It seems to have been taken as a logical principle for the capital of an agrarian state to have been built in an area of fertile soil and rich resources, as is advocated in the *Guan Zi* (vol. 18: "Duo Di," no. 57),

> . . . so that the natural conditions can be relied on, and the productive advantage of the land can be beneficial, which will support the people's life there and provide for raising livestock.

A similar proposition can be found in the *Wei Liao Zi* (vol. 1: "Bing Tan," no. 2) written in the Warring States period:

> The fecundity of the soil is examined so as to establish a settlement and build a city; and therefore to protect the land by virtue of the city, to support the people by virtue of the land, and to produce crops by virtue of the people.

The transference of the Wu capital from the hilly area in the north-west towards the Taihu 太湖 (i.e. Lake Tai) plain in the south-east, with its fertile land, rich natural resources, and geographically convenient transport systems, finally boosted Wu's agricultural production and foundry industry which in turn supported its bid for hegemony.[90] Since the state of Wu was regarded by the authors of the Eastern Han documents as on the south-east fringes of ancient China, in territories that were essentially barbarian in character, and as a newcomer to Chinese diplomacy, it is not surprising that in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* and *Yue Jue Shu*, there is no account of the pursuit of the centrality of the city prescribed in the *Zhou Li*. Locally, however, the site was regarded by many scholars of later periods as endowed with considerable potentialities for the city's later development. Zhu Zichang 朱子昌 of the Yuan dynasty, for example, summarised the idea about this locational quality:

> Wu has the superior terrain conditions [*xingsheng* 形勢][91] of the

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90 The same consideration is more explicitly revealed in the recorded proposal by Fan Li to the king of Yue for re-locating the Yue capital:

> Now that the great king intends to establish the state and to build the capital, in order to annex the territories of the rival states, if the capital were not situated on the level plain from which the four quarters can be reached, how would the enterprise of hegemony be pursued? (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 8: "Goujian Guiguo Waizhuan")

91 We find the same term used by Xun Qing 荀卿 (*c.* 313-238 B.C.) as the criterion for the site of the capital with the advantages of strategic tenability, convenience of

> Three Rivers and the Five Lakes.[92] Hence its land has been powerful and prosperous from the past to the present. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Xingshi")

No process of divinatory precautions for the choice of the site of the Wu capital is recorded. The only implicit reference relevant to this issue is that when Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (?-484 B.C.), a prominent minister of the king of Wu, was authorised to plan the new capital, he asked the experts [in geomancy?] "to survey the terrain of the land and taste the waters [*xiangtu changshui* 相土嘗水]."[93] (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4) The character *xiang* 相 here implies a two-fold meaning, namely, to survey *and* to divine, and there is no doubt that such an implication is of great antiquity.[94] Indeed, since oracles were seen as having been taken for various matters in Wu and Yue, as recorded in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (*passim*), it is likely that divination would have been one of the indispensable measures for such a great event as choosing the site for a capital city. Yet the phrase *xiangtu changshui* as a whole was probably of Han origin. In fact, from the *Han Shu* (vol. 49: "Chuan," 19: "Chao Cuo") a similar account is found in Chao Cuo's 晁錯 (200-154 B.C.) enunciation of the procedure of building a new city on a new site:

> [One should first] survey [*xiang* 相] the harmonious aspects of its [site's] *yin* and *yang*, taste [*chang* 嘗] its waters, examine [*shen* 審] the suitability of the soil, and observe [*guan* 觀] the exuberance of its vegetation. After this, [one may] build the city and erect its walls.

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transport, beautiful scenery and rich natural resources. (*Xun Zi*, vol. 11: "Qiangguo," no. 16)

92 "The Three Rivers (Sanjiang 三江)," according to Fan Chengda means the Rivers Song 淞, Dong 東 and Lou 婁 which ran through the Wu territory, although other interpretations are not to be excluded. "The Five Lakes (Wuhu 五湖)" is probably another name for Lake Tai. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 48: "Kaozheng")

93 Ji Yuyi (1988:38-40) has made a rather bold suggestion which deviates from the traditionally received interpretation of the phrase. He argues that the character *shui* 水 ("water") is a wrong word, erroneously transcribed from the character *he* 禾 ("crops"), and thus that the character *chang* 嘗 (lit. "to taste or try") here does not mean "to inspect or examine" but denotes a special sacrifice in autumn. Therefore, this phrase, in his view, should be interpreted as "to survey the terrain of the land and offer sacrifice to the gods [before the construction of the city]." While this suggestion is very interesting, I think it is safer at the present time to leave it here only as a reference rather than to take it as an *a priori* conclusion, and to await further proofs.

94 In a passage from the *Shang Shu*, to which we have referred earlier in section 2.2.1, we read, "King Cheng was at Feng, and intended to build his palace at Luo, [therefore he] ordered the Duke of Shao to survey [*xiang*] [the area where] his palace was to be built." Kong commented, "*Xiang* means to survey the area and to divine it." (Vol. 15: "Zhou Shu": "Shao Gao")

2.3.2 The Form and Measurements of the City Walls

According to the *Yue Jue Shu*, (vol. 2) Helü Dacheng was a city with three layers of walls. The middle city wall (*dacheng* 大城) enclosing the city proper measured 47 *li* 里 210 *bu* 步 2 *chi* 尺 (approx. 20.18km at the Eastern Han Standard) in perimeter. Ji Yuyi, (1988:34) who, to my knowledge, is the first scholar to treat this matter of the recorded measurements of the city critically, suggests that the record "47 *li*" might be a faulty transcription of "37 *li*", and that thus the perimeter of the wall would have been less than 16km.[95] If this were true, the measurement of the *dacheng* would have been roughly in accordance with what was stated in the *Zhou Li*, that is, 36 *li* in perimeter ("a square with sides of 9 *li*"). The outer city wall (*guo* 郭) measured 68 *li* 60 *bu* (approx. 28.85km) in perimeter, its proportion to the wall of the city proper (*dacheng*) also being approximately consistent with that of its contemporary cities in Central China.[96] The wall of the inner enclosure (*xiaocheng* 小城), actually the king's palace (*gong* 宮), was 12 *li* (approx. 5.08km) in perimeter according to the *Yue Jue Shu* (vol. 2), which again is in line with that of the ideal Zhou royal capital, although the figures in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 4) and the *Wudi Ji* are read respectively as 10 *li* and 8 *li* 660 *bu*, which is regarded by Ji Yuyi (op.cit. 35) as the consequence of scribal errors as well.

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95 The accounts of its size vary in other documents of later periods. In the *Wudi Ji*, a local record book of Suzhou written from the Tang period onward, for example, it is recorded as 45 *li* 30 *bu* in perimeter. I am not sure whether the difference may be attributed to the different measurements of the *chi* applied in those different dynastic periods. Fortunately, however, the measurements of the four sides of the *dacheng* are also recorded in detail in the same volume of the *Yue Jue Shu*: the south side measures 10 *li* 42 *bu* 5 *chi*; the west, 7 *li* 112 *bu* 3 *chi*; the north, 8 *li* 226 *bu* 3 *chi*; and the east, 11 *li* 79 *bu* 1 *chi*. Thus, the perimeter of the *dacheng* must have been 37 *li* 161 *bu* (approx. 15.88km at the Eastern Han Standard). This measurement can be further verified if another record in the same volume is taken into account: the central street of the city from Chang 閶 Gate to Lou 婁 Gate is 9 *li* 72 *bu* long, and from Ping 平 Gate to She 蛇 Gate, 10 *li* 75 *bu*.

96 In the *Yi Zhou Shu*, (vol. 5: "Zuo Luo," no. 48) the outer city wall of the Zhou royal capital at Luoyang 洛陽 is recorded as being "a square with sides of 72 *li*", that is, 288 *li* in perimeter, which is eight times that of the city proper. This account has been challenged by scholars of later dynastic periods, and seems impossible in consideration of the geographical conditions in Luoyang and the economic resources of those times. (*Zhou Li Zhengyi*, vol. 83: "Kaogong Ji": "Jiangren" with Sun Yirang's 孫怡讓 (1848-1908) commentary; He 1985:61; Ji 1988:35) Generally speaking, the proportion of the length of the *cheng* perimeter to that of the *guo* perimeter at that time, according some other writings such as the *Meng Zi* (vol. 4A: "Gongsun Chou" Section, B) and the *Zhanguo Ce* (vol. 4: "Qi"), appears to have ranged from 1:1.4 to 1:2.3. This proportion has been proved by archaeological evidence. (He 1985:62) Thus the outer city wall of the Zhou royal capital at Luoyang, for example, probably measured 68-70 *li* in perimeter, and was erroneously transcribed. (Ji 1988:36)

Little is known about the sectional dimensions of the walls of the *dacheng* and *guo*. However, since the *Yue Jue Shu* (vol. 2) records that the walls of the *xiaocheng* measured 2 *zhang* 7 *chi* (approx. 6.3m at the Eastern Han standard) thick at the base, and 4 *zhang* 7 *chi* (approx. 11m) high,[97] and since the canonical planning principles of the royal Zhou capital recorded in the "Kaogong Ji" prescribe that the walls of the city proper should be two *zhi* 雉[98] higher than the walls of the palace enclosure, we may conjecture that the sectional dimensions of the walls of the city proper may have been larger than those of the inner-enclosure.

The positions of these enclosures relative to each other and the exact form of the city are uncertain due to the paucity of information concerning them. The early documents do not give any explicit account of the position of the wall of the inner-enclosure in relation to that of the wall of the city proper, and of the latter to that of the outer city wall, but it is very possible, as has been traditionally accepted, that they formed a three-layer concentric enceinte, which would accord with the institutionalised plan of the Zhou city. Moreover, the walled inner-enclosure has even been speculated to be at the very centre of the city (Qu 1991:221) or at the position of slightly east of centre. (See, e.g., Ji 1988:43-4) On the other hand, the accounts of the lengths of the four sides of the wall of the city proper in the *Yue Jue Shu* seem to imply that the form of the city was a four-sided, if deformed, square. I assume that these aspects of the city may have been regarded by early scholars as *sine qua non* for anything that could properly be termed a city, and ink would therefore not necessarily have been wasted on them.

Because of the lack of archaeological evidence, it is impossible to tell from these accounts of the physical form of Helü Dacheng which part of them reflects the actual city in the late sixth century B.C. and was transmitted through time to the authors of the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, and which part was based on their own perceptions of it in their time. In Figure 2-4 I present a conjectural diagrammatic plan of this recorded city, which is based upon literary information and the city maps of later dynastic periods. The lengths of the three walls retain the

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97 A few characters describing the height of the walls are missing in some of the editions of this work. Since this height recorded in the other sources appears to have been extraordinary in proportion to its thickness, the accuracy of this account becomes doubtful. For a discussion of the proportion of the height to the thickness of the city walls in the Spring and Autumn period, see, He 1985:65-7.

98 One *zhi* equals three *zhang* in length and one *zhang* in height.

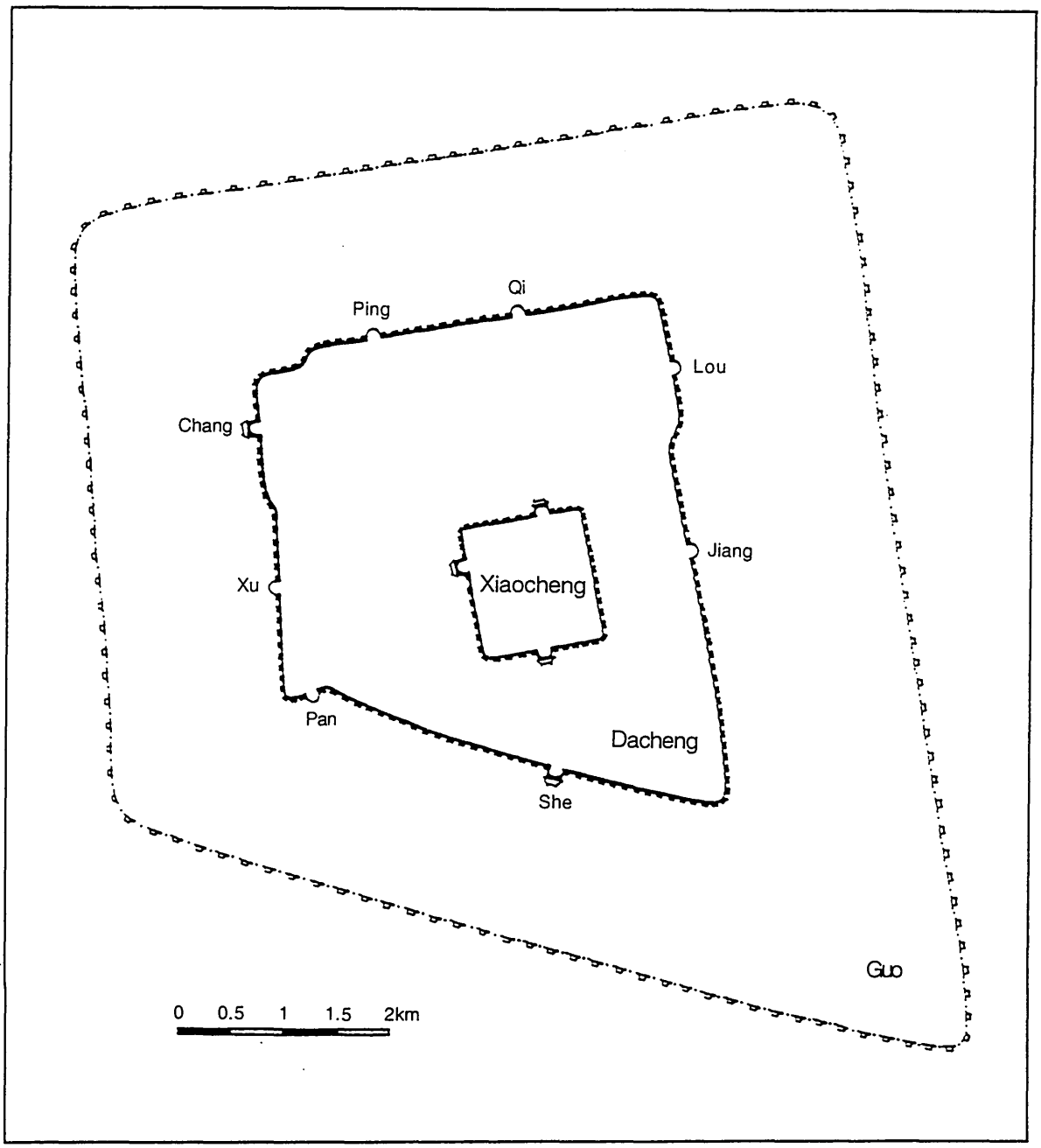

Figure 2-4 Diagrammatic plan of Helü Dacheng. Based on literary descriptions mainly in the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, and on the city maps of later dynastic periods. I have also consulted the diagrammatic plan of the city speculated by Cao and Wu 1986:30, which may contain some serious errors in the scale and proportion of the length of the walls due to the adoption of faulty literary records and the incorrect conversion of ancient length units.

proportions accorded them by the descriptions in the *Yue Jue Shu*, whereas only the form of the city proper in the diagrammatic plan can be regarded with some certainty as close to that in which the wall was really constructed, and that only so as long as the speculated positioning of the city gates is considered to be acceptable,[99] and the *Yue Jue Shu*'s record of the measurements of its four sides and its main streets reliable.

2.3.3 Principal Structures of the City

Except for the walled inner-enclosure (*xiaocheng*) which was unfailingly the king's main palace complex, and a couple of small building compounds serving as the temporary royal abodes, other essential features of Helü Dacheng and Yue's capital, such as the Ancestral Temple (*zongmiao* 宗廟), the Altar to the God of Earth and Grain (*sheji* 社稷), and the market (*shi* 市), have not directly been described in any ancient document. However, their existence is concomitantly implied in the descriptions of certain historical events. Whereas the Ancestral Temple and the Altar of Earth and Grain are mentioned many times in the *Yue Jue Shu* and the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, especially when the survival or destruction of cities are concerned,[100] little information about their formation and positions can be extracted. It is quite possible that, as in the case of the morphology of the city, since they were seen as basically planned in such a way as to conform to the canonical principles advocated in the *Zhou Li*, a conformity which was regarded as common sense in city construction, there would have been no need to describe them in the documents.

In speculations on the location and formation of the market in Helü Dacheng we face a similar situation. A market is mentioned several times in both the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu* without detailed information. Nevertheless, one can at least infer that an appointed official, known as the *shizheng* 市正 or *shili* 市吏, supervised the activities in the market, which would be quite crowded in day-time,

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99 Qu Yingjie, (1991:211-25) contradicting the traditionally accepted supposition, holds that in the early stage of the city's development Ping Gate and Qi Gate were really in reverse positions. He also argues that the city was built in imitation of the capital city of Chu at Ying. Yet his argument is equally not based on archaeological evidence but solely on assumption.

100 In some circumstances, the Ancestral Temple and the Altar of Earth and Grain are referred to as representing the existence of the state and city. But I am disposed to regard the mentions of these two features in the documents in question as a two-fold implication, that is, of the existence of the state and city, and of the two city structures *per se*.

and where public gatherings would be held and criminals punished or executed in front of crowds. One can also speculate, though with less certainty, that the market was probably established, approximately as in the ideal city according to the *Zhou Li*, in the north of the city.[101] At several of the earlier urban sites archaeologists have reported the existence of workshops not only within the walled enclaves but also dispersed through the surrounding countryside on the old Shang and early Zhou pattern. (Wheatley 1971:185; He 1990:59, 61) Wheatley (op.cit. 186) suggests that during the Eastern Zhou, however, this dispersed morphology seems to have undergone a major transformation and urban outer city walls were then constructed to enclose previously extramural settlements and workshops. This might also have been the case in the Wu capital. Due to the well developed economy of Wu, handicraft-production and commerce became active and important in the city. Information about the workshops of porcelain and pottery, jade chiselling, and textiles is scarce; they may be surmised to have been scattered in the city or at least within the outer wall. (Cao and Wu 1986:32) It was also possible that a sword foundry was located near Jiang 將 Gate, its name being derived from that of the legendary swordsmith Ganjiang 干將.[102] (Cf. *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4; *Wudi Ji*)

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101 In the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 3) we read:

> Guang 光 [Helü 闔閭], secretly seeking able and virtuous persons, appointed one who was good at physiognomy to be the *shili* of the Wu [market]. . . . Zixu fled to Wu, then pretended to be lunatic with his hair dishevelled, face covered with dirt, and barefoot, begging in the market. The crowd in the market did not notice him. Next day, the Wu *shili* who was adept in physiognomy saw him, . . . and then reported it to King Liao 僚 of Wu. (Cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 1: "Jingping Wang Neizhuan")

In another volume (vol. 4) it runs,

> The king of the Wu then executed his [Yaoli's 要離] wife, set her ablaze and abandoned her there in the market."

Moreover,

> [On the day of the funeral for the Wu King's daughter,] [Helü] then let white cranes dance in the Wu market, and ordered thousands of people to follow as spectators. (Cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2; *Wudi Ji*)

There must therefore have been a market in the Wu capital before Wu Zixu's reconstruction. The market in the reconstructed capital was later also known as the Market of Cranes (Heshi 鶴市), and the bridge nearby as the Crane-dancing (Hewu 鶴舞) Bridge due to the afore mentioned event. (Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 17: "Bridge") Wang Jian 王謇 (1888-1969) suggests that the Crane-dancing Bridge was located in the north (slightly by east) of the city, near Xiangfu Si 祥符寺 Street. (SPCK, vol. 4: "North-east Corner")

102 The founding of the famous swords known as Ganjiang 干將 and Moye 莫耶 is mythical and interesting. According to the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, (vol. 4) the legendary swordsmith Ganjiang

> Extracted the essence of iron from the five mountains and the spirit of metal from Heaven, Earth and the four quarters [*liuhe* 六合], to start founding the swords. The sky had been observed and the earth examined, the *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 had converged [to produce] the same

2.4 THE CITY AS A COSMIC CENTRE

2.4.1 Heaven and Earth

According to the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, (vol. 4) Wu Zixu was commissioned by the king of Wu to rebuild the capital.

> [He] followed the forms manifested in Heaven and the processes taking place on Earth [*xiangtian fadi* 象天法地], and then constructed the great city wall [*dacheng* 大城].

This passage reminds us of the records concerning the mythical emperor Fu Xi 伏羲 devising the eight trigrams:

> In antiquity, when Pao Xi 包犧 [i.e. Fu Xi] had come to rule all under Heaven, he looked up and contemplated the forms exhibited in Heaven, and he looked down and contemplated the processes repeated on Earth. He contemplated the patterns of birds and beasts, and the properties of the various habitats and places. Near at hand, in his own body, he found things for consideration, and the same at a distance, in events in general. Thus he devised the eight trigrams, in order to enter into relations with the virtues of the Bright Spirits, and to classify the relations of the ten thousand things. (*Yi Jing*, vol. 8: "Xici," B)[103]

Thus the construction of the capital was seen as having been pursued, like other human activities, in accordance with the cosmic order revealed in the recurring

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> light, myriad gods had come to watch, and the *qi* 氣 of Heaven had descended, but the essence of the metal still did not melt. . . . Moye [Ganjiang's wife] said, "The transformation of divine things has to be accomplished with humans. . . ." Ganjiang replied, "In the past when my master was engaged in the metal foundry, the metal did not melt. Both he and his wife jumped into the smelting furnace, and the utensils were then founded." . . . So Ganjiang's wife, with her hair cut and nails trimmed, threw herself into the furnace. [Ganjiang] ordered three hundred virgin boys and girls to assist in air blasting and charcoal feeding, the metal then melted, and [two] swords were created. The [one which was of] *yang* was called Ganjiang, and the [one which was of] *yin* was called Moye.

Whereas the story is surely a legendary account of the founding of the swords, it nevertheless contains the view that human sacrifice was essential for divine objects to be created. This appears to correspond to Eliade's (1959:56) arguments, "If a 'construction' is to endure (be it house, temple, tool, etc.), it must be animated, that is, it must receive life and a soul. The transfer of the soul is possible only through a blood sacrifice."

103 Similar accounts can be read in the *Huainan Zi*, vol. 20: "Taizu Xun."

rotational processes of Nature, so that the city became not only a replica but also an integral, harmonious part of the cosmos, and thus drew forth the power of that order into the city and the state, just in the same way that Wu Zixu convinced the king that Wu possessed "the ordained fate from Heaven [*tianqi zhi shu* 天氣之數] of threatening its neighbouring states." (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4)

From the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, (ibid.) we understand that one of the ways in which the city was constructed following the cosmic order was that "eight land gates [were built] to symbolise the eight winds from Heaven [*tian zhi bafeng* 天之八風], and eight water gates [were built] to imitate the eight intelligent attributes of Earth [*di zhi bacong* 地之八聰]."[104] Whereas the concept of the eight winds from Heaven must have been formed well before the Han period,[105] I have so far not been able to determine whether the correlation of the eight heavenly winds with the eight gates of this city was an idea of its builders, or an invention of the later scholars influenced by the syncretic cosmology of the Han. Nevertheless, a two-fold implication in this cosmic scheme seems to emerge. First, the city was supposed to be built as a replica of the cosmos. With its cosmological symbolism, the city condensed and represented the world, and hopefully established a link between the world of man and the world beyond. Second, as Ji Yuyi (1988:40) suggests, whereas the city is not recorded as having followed in this aspect the form of the ideal capital for the Son of Heaven prescribed in the *Zhou Li*, in that it contained only eight rather than twelve gates, the application of the symbols for the eight winds, of which the Son of Heaven probably used to have the exclusive title,[106] appears to

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104 An interpretation of the terms *bacong* is worth attempting. The character *cong* 聰 means "sensitivity of hearing," extended to denote "learning something and thus being intelligent." (CH 1980:1822; CY 1981:2536) It also has the implication of window, as the *Shi Ming* (vol. 5: "Shi Gongshi") explained, "*Cong* denotes window. From the inside [through the window] to peek to the outside is [to become] wise." In some documents of later times, such as the *Wudi Ji* and the *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 3: "Chengguo"), we read, "Eight water gates [were built] to imitate the Eight Trigrams [*bagua* 八卦] of Earth." Ji Yuyi (1988:40-1) has suggested again boldly that the character *cong* was erroneously transcribed from *ji* 極. I see this suggestion as too radical to be accepted for the moment.

105 The concept appears in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, its authenticity as a pre-Qin text, as Carson and Loewe (1993:324) indicate, being generally accepted.

106 In the *Zuo Zhuan*, (vol. 3: "Duke Yin 5th Year") for example, it is recorded that Duke Yin 隱, offering sacrifices in the Temple of Zhong Zi 仲子, and presenting the spirits with dancing performances, asked his advisers about the proper number of the dancers. They replied, "The Son of Heaven uses eight [lines in square, i.e. 64 dancers], princes and Dukes use six [lines in square, i.e. 36 dancers], senior officials use four [lines in square, i.e. 16 dancers], and junior officials use two [lines in square, i.e. 4 dancers]. The dancing is to promote the eight winds by virtue of the rhythms of the eight musical sounds, therefore [the application of the number of dancers] should be in degression from eight [lines in square]."

have signified the ambition of the king of Wu.

Similar measures are described to have been applied in the construction of the Yue capital as the first step towards the rejuvenation of that state after a total defeat by Wu. Fan Li 范蠡, the chief minister of the king of Yue, being ordered to take charge of building the capital, "observed the forms manifested in Heaven, and constructed the inner city wall [*xiaocheng* 小城] by imitating the Purple Palace [*zigong* 紫宮] [of Heaven]." (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 8: "Goujian Guiguo Waizhuan") The Purple Palace is also known as the Purple Forbidden Palace (*ziweigong* 紫微宮) or the Purple Forbidden Enclosure (*ziweiyuan* 紫微垣), which designates the central celestial area around the polar star,[107] and was believed to be where the celestial High God resided. (Cf. *Huainan Zi*, vol. 1: "Yuandao Xun" with Gao's commentary) By being a replica of the God's palace, the king's earthly palace and city were imbued with the sacred celestial order and thus instilled with vitality and cosmic power.[108] Four gates facing four directions were built for the inner city, like the city gates of Helü Dacheng, to symbolise the eight winds. (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 8) Then the outer walls were constructed.[109]

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107 Cf. Needham's (1959:259-62) discussion of this celestial phenomenon from the astronomical point of view.

108 The analogy of the Purple Forbidden Palace with the imperial court was more fully elaborated in the later dynastic periods. In the *Sanfu Huangtu*, (vol. 1: "Xianyang Gucheng") and the *Jin Shu* (vol. 11: "Zhi," no. 1: "Tianwen," A), for example, it is recorded that the palaces of the First Emperor (Shi Huangdi 始皇帝 [259-210 B.C.]) of Qin 秦 allegedly imitated the Purple Forbidden Palace so as to symbolise his absolute power.

109 The same document (ibid.) also preserves an interesting conversation between the king and Fan Li, who reported to the king after the completion of the construction of the capital:

> "As a minister I constructed the city which corresponds to Heaven. It even retains the likeness of Mt. Kunlun 崑崙." The king of Yue said, "I have heard that Mt. Kunlun is the pillar of Earth. It reaches august Heaven above and therefore has the *qi* 氣 ["cosmic breath"] prevalent in the whole world; it is rooted in deep Earth and therefore receives [the natural resources and qualities] from the limitless realms. It nourishes what is sacred and produces what is divine; it immensely nurtures the High God's residence. Therefore the [Five] Emperors resided in the *yang* 陽 area on it, and the Three Kings lived at the pivot of it. My state is at the periphery of Heaven and Earth, and on the far south-east guy-rope of Earth, and the Big Dipper is in the extreme north. . . . How can it be compared with those which are endowed with regal magnificence?" Fan Li said, "My lord has only noticed what is extrinsic without recognising what is intrinsic. I have constructed the city corresponding to the Gate of Heaven, and the *qi* has been concentrated in deep Earth [on which the city stands]. The image of the great mountain has been established, and Mt. Kunlun has thus been [symbolically] produced. [All these will ensure] the hegemony of Yue."

From such early documents as the *Shan Hai Jing*, *Huainan Zi*, *Shui Jing Zhu* and *Bowu Zhi*,

2.4.2 City Walls

Despite Wu's progress over the preceding decades, it still lagged behind the larger states in Central China in various aspects such as the political, the economic and the military. In this circumstance, Helü consulted his prime minister Wu Zixu 伍子胥, as the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 4) claims:

> "I intend to strengthen the state and seek hegemony. . . . But my state stands in the out-of-the-way south-east where the terrain is complicated and cut-off, and where the air is humid and the land is constantly devastated by flood from the rivers and the sea. There are neither adequate fortified defence works for the king, nor enough measures for the guarantee of security for the people's life. The granaries are short of grain, while the soil is largely left uncultivated. How can our ambition be realised?" Wu Zixu replied, "I have learned that putting the ruler in a secured, supreme place and the people in reasonable order, is the priority in the *dao* 道 of ruling a state. . . . The way to attain this *dao*, to seek hegemony, and to extend your dominion from those near to those afar, must be firstly to erect city walls [*chengguo* 城郭], set up a system of defence, replenish the stocks, and manage the arsenals."

The same document (vol. 8) also tells us that once the king of Yue was released from Wu after his three-year hostageship, he consulted his prime minister Fan Li 范蠡

> ". . . Now [I] intend to stabilise the state and erect city walls [*dingguo licheng* 定國立城];[110] yet the people are not enriched, their achievements are unable to be enhanced; how can we accomplish our tasks?" Fan Li replied, "Tang 唐 and Yu 虞[111] surveyed and divined the land; the Xia 夏 and Yin 殷 demarcated territories; Gugong 古公[112] constructed his city; and the sacred power of the Zhou capital at Luo 雒 prevailed over ten thousand *li*

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we learn that Mt. Kunlun was believed to be the capital of the High God on earth (*di zhi xiadu* 帝之下都). Its pinnacle reaches heaven, and thus it is the centre of the world, where myriad deities and gods reside, including the goddess Xi Wang Mu 西王母 (lit. "Queen-Mother of the West"). It is also the mystic mountain where the Underworld (*Youdu* 幽都) can be entered. In addition, there is a bronze pillar on the mountain, so high as to penetrate the sky and therefore named the Pillar of Heaven (*Tianzhu* 天柱). Since the capital of Yue, a marginal state on the fringes of Classical China, was believed to have been built as a replica of this cosmic mountain, it could then be interpreted as having constituted the pre-eminent link between Earth and Heaven, and hence acquiring the paramount cosmic power for its survival and glory.

110 Note the dual denotations of the character *guo* 國: state *and* walled capital city.

111 The Tang and Yu were both ancient tribes. The Tang is also known as the Taotang 陶唐 and its leader was the legendary ruler Yao 堯; and the Yu as the Youyu 有虞 whose leader was the legendary ruler Shun 舜. Thus "Tang and Yu" just mean "Yao and Shun" here.

112 Gugong Danfu 古公亶父. See section 1.1.2.

里, and its moral influence reached the eight farthest ends [*baji* 八極].Were [these activities] meant to defeat powerful enemies and to annex neighbouring territories?"

It is clear then that constructing city walls was interpreted as equivalent to establishing the state, and founding the capital was thus regarded as the very first step towards an idealised order. This order may be interpreted not only in social but also in cosmic terms.

I have noted repeatedly that the symbolism of the centre at which the king resided, was in correspondence with his moral and social position at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. The form of concentric city walls ideally embodied such a conception, and was symbolised in the pictograph *guo* 郭 in its archaic form. (See, e.g., *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 5B) Of course, the concentricity of the city walls derives from considerations of security, as the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* states explicitly:

> Gun 鯀[113] constructed the *cheng* so as to defend the ruler, built the *guo* so as to settle the people, and these are the origin of the walled city [*chengguo* 城郭].[114]

Yet this sense of security must not be interpreted only in practical terms. Eliade, (1959:49) arguing that since the city is an orderly cosmos, any attack from without threatens to turn it into chaos, writes:

> It is highly probable that the fortifications of inhabited places and cities began by being magical defences; for fortifications - trenches, labyrinths, ramparts, etc. - were designed rather to repel invasion by demons and the souls of the dead than attacks by human beings. . . . the result of attacks, whether demonic or military, is always the same - ruin, disintegration, death.

This is not to say that the purpose of defending against *either* demonic *or* human attacks is the first consideration for fortifications. It seems reasonable to assume that the ancients conceived of the natural world as an extension of their own personalities, and consequently apprehended it in terms of human experience. Thus, in the mind of the ancients, the "real" world transcended the material realm of textures and geometrical space, and was perceived schematically in terms of a

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113 Gun is the semi-legendary emperor Yu's father. He failed to regulate the rivers and water-courses, and was therefore killed by Shun 舜 at Mt. Yu 羽.

114 This passage is missing in the currently preserved *Wu Yue Chunqiu*. There are many otherwise lost passages which have been cited in other documents of later dynastic periods. I cite this passage from *Taiping Yulan*, vol. 193: "Juchu" Section, no. 21: "Cheng," B.

cosmic experience. It is in this line of thought that, in his study of ancient Near Eastern Religion, Henri Frankfort (1948:3) writes a passage that seems largely applicable to the experience of the ancient Chinese as well:

> The ancients, however, experienced human life as part of a widely spreading network of connections which reached beyond the local and the national communities into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature. The purely secular - in so far as it could be granted to exist at all - was the purely trivial. Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration.

The sacred and the profane are not to be seen as the dichotomy of two different concerns, and, in fact, there is no difficulty for human thinking in assimilating the human enemy to the devil and death. For the ancient Chinese in a ritualised society, the line between the divine (or demonic) and the human indeed was not sharply drawn. As the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 9: "Duke Zhuang 14th Year") records, when two snakes were found fighting each other at the south gate of the Zheng 鄭 capital, and the one inside the gate was killed, Duke Li 厲 asked Shen Xu 申繻 whether it meant there were demons (*yao* 妖) present. Shen Xu replied,

> . . . Demons are promoted by man. If man did not have blemishes, demons would not make trouble. If man forsakes the constant course [*chang* 常], demons are stirred up, and thus there will be demons.

Therefore, what is divine (or demonic) would fully converge with what is human into the proper rituals and moral righteousness, and the bright gods (*mingshen* 明神) would descend from Heaven either to examine the morality of a flourishing city or state, or to inspect the viciousness of a perishing city or state. (*Zuo Zhuan* vol. 10: "Duke Zhuang 32nd Year") In this sense, the city walls appear to some extent to have been as much of symbolic meaning in the affirmation of the power of the state and of the centrality of the king as of any practical military defence, since what really mattered was social order and morality within the state and within the city, which had to be in accordance with the cosmic order and potency, an order that could not be defended with material fortifications alone.

This aspect is reflected in the Chinese preoccupation with city walls.[115] The

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115 Granet (1930:237 and 239) has correctly noted that, for the Chinese, the walls were "the most sacred part of the town," and that "the divinity of the town is lodged in the gates and walls."

character for *cheng* came to denote both "city" and "city wall."[116] It can even be detected from the definitions of the terms *cheng* 城 and *guo* 郭 by Xu Shen 許慎 (*c.* A.D. 58-147), the great philologist of the Eastern Han, from a semantic point of view. "*Cheng*," he explains, "is [applied to mean] to hold [*cheng* 盛] people. [It] contains [the radicals of] 'earth' [*tu* 土] and 'to achieve' [*cheng* 成]." Here Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815) comments by quoting a passage from the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 6: "Duke Huan 6th Year"), "The sage king first helped the people to make achievements [*chengmin* 成民], then offered sacrifices to the gods afterwards." (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chap. 13B) This passage does not indicate a sequential order in which the sage king accomplished his tasks, but rather, since the essentials and situations (*qing* 情) of the demons and gods would vary in correspondence with the conditions of the people, to promote people's achievements meant simultaneously to be reverent to the demons and gods, and perhaps to have fulfilled the paradigmatic task of the gods on earth.[117] As for the term *guo*, Xu Shen defines it as "to rule by institutionalised order [*du* 度],[118] [and thus it is] where the people live in institutionalised order." (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 5B)[119] The city, the orderly cosmos, has to be protected against any threat from without which, no matter whether a natural calamity or a military attack, always carried a demonic implication to the people within, since any destruction of the city was in a sense equivalent to a retrogression to chaos. It must also be guarded against any danger of either degradation or dysfunction from within which would mark the beginning of the deterioration of the waning of the existing order and eventually lead to death and decay. The city walls, together with the city moats which we will see in a moment, symbolise such protection from the perils both without and within.

Since the construction of the Yue capital was preceded by a total defeat by Fuchai, and since at that time Yue became a *de facto* vassal state of Wu, the form and scale of the city are said to have been fairly modest as compared to Helü Dacheng. On the one hand, in the *Yue Jue Shu*, (vol. 8: "Waizhuan Ji Di Zhuan") the wall of the

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116 As a verb, it also meant both "to construct a city" and "to construct city walls."

117 See Du Yu 杜預 (A.D. 222-284) and Kong Yingda's commentaries on this passage from the *Zuo Zhuan*.

118 Cf. *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 3B for the definition of the character *du*.

119 Xu Shen also claims that *guo* is the archaic form of *yong* 墉 which denotes city walls (*chengyuan* 城垣). Mao in his commentaries on the odes *Huang Yi* 皇矣 (*Shi Jing*, vol. 16-4: "Xiao Ya") and *Song Gao* 崧高 (op.cit. vol. 18-3) defines *yong* as *cheng*. Duan Yucai explains that *cheng* emphasises what is contained within the walls, while *yong* emphasises the material wall which physically contains. (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chap. 13B)

inner-enclosure (*xiaocheng*) is said to have measured 2 *li* 223 *bu*[120] (approx. 1.16km at the Eastern Han standard) in perimeter, while the city proper (*dacheng*) had a wall of 20 *li* 72 *bu* (approx. 8.56km) in perimeter; and on the other, no outer city wall (*guo*) is recorded as ever having been constructed. Probably Yue could have been forced to make no more humiliating a gesture, signifying Yue's subjection to Wu in the very construction of its capital, than the recorded reversing of the city's orientation. The *Shui Jing Zhu* (vol. 40: "Jianjiang Shui") runs:

> Therefore [the king of Yue] set its [main city] gate in the north, taking the east as [his] right side, the west as [his] left side. Thus the pair of *que* 闕[121] was [erected] outside the North Gate.

A capital and its orientation were supposed to be aligned in accordance with the position of the king, i.e., facing the south at the centre of the city, with the east as his left side and the west as his right side, as indicated by the description of the layout of an ideal Zhou royal city recorded in the "Kaogong Ji." The reason why Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (A.D. ?-527), the author of the *Shui Jing Zhu*, mentions the reversal and the right/left sides is simply to stress how grave a humiliation it was for Yue to face the north in acknowledgement of its allegiance as Wu's vassal. Moreover, the north-west corner of the city was allegedly left unwalled, with a two-fold purpose. In its openness, it symbolised Yue's allegiance to Wu and Yue's having no intention of resisting Wu's forces; but secretly, this opening was intentionally left for the convenience of any fast manoeuvre against Wu in the future. It was not until Yue subjugated Wu in 473 B.C. that the opening in the north-west corner of the city wall was closed. (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 8; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 8)

2.4.3 City Moats

Whereas in the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu* there is no particular description of the city moats of Helü Dacheng, the multiplicity of water gates suggests that the walls of both the city proper and the inner-enclosure may have been surrounded by moats. Indeed, in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 5) we read: "Wu has city walls [*cheng* 城] that are thick and lofty, and city moats [*chi* 池] that are wide and deep," a statement said to have been made by Zigong 子貢 (520-? B.C.), one of

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120 In the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, (vol. 8) the inner city wall measures 1,121 *bu* in perimeter.

121 A *que* is one of the two ornamented columns erected outside the main gate of a royal palace or tomb.

Confucius' disciples, who in 483 B.C. shuttled between the states of Qi 齊 and Wu trying to persuade Wu to attack Qi so as to save Lu 魯 from the latter's threat. The importance of city moats has been such that the characters *cheng* and *chi* for "city wall" and "moat"[122] also jointly connote "city" (*chengchi* 城池). It seems logical that the city walls would have been accompanied by moats: in terms of building technique, much of the earth applied to the construction of the wall conveniently came from the moat that was dug out beside it;[123] and in terms of defence, the addition of a moat simply doubled the fortifications. Yet what seems more significant is that the moats turn out to have been symbolically no less important, in terms of defending the established cosmic order within the city, than the walls. In one of the Appendices of the *Yi Jing*, (vol. 2: "Tai") the *Xiang Zhuan* 象傳, which may be dated within the few decades on either side of 200 B.C.,[124] we read,

> The [earth of the] wall [collapses and] returns into the moat, [this indicates that] the mandate has been in disorder.

Here Kong Yingda commented in the seventh century,

> If the mandate is to be kept from being in disorder, the subjects should assist the ruler [in governing the state] as the earth supports the wall. If the mandate is left deranged and in disorder, the lower will not respect the higher as the earth will not support the wall, leading to its [the wall's] [collapsing and] returning into the moat. This is why it is termed "the mandate being in disorder."

Therefore, if the wall collapses and its earth refills the moat from which it came, the eclipse of the orderly is seen as a deterioration and eventually a retrogression to chaos, and the existence of the city or state will be brought to an end. In this sense, the wall and moat both symbolically represent and protect the existing order ordained from Heaven.

According to the *Li Ji*, (vol. 26: "Jiao Te Xing," no. 11 with Zheng's commentary) the moat with water (*shuiyong* 水庸) was taken as being the seventh deity to which the Son of Heaven offered sacrifices in winter (*zhaji* 蜡祭). It is not

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122 When defining the character *huang* 隍, Xu Shen (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 14B) explained, "[City moats] with water are called *chi*; without water, *huang*."

123 If the quality of the local earth was not satisfactory for the walls to be strong and durable, better earth would be conveyed from other regions, as recorded in the *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, (Vol: C: "Wang Ji") "It was said that Wu Zixu, after leading the army to attack Chu, conveyed earth from Danyang 丹陽 and Huangdu 黃瀆 to [re-]construct [the city wall], probably in order to give it extra strength."

124 Cf. Graham 1989:359; Shaughnessy 1993:221.

impossible that the *chenghuang* 城隍 (lit. "city wall and moat," but loosely translated as "city god") of later ages derived from the worship of a water-located deity, and until the early Tang existed mainly in the Wu and Yue regions.[125] Although the tutelary deity embodied in the city moat in earlier times was not analogous to the city god or goddess who was a nature-related deity and on whom the city in Mesopotamia was centred, (Schwartz 1985:21) he may have been seen as a guardian with transcendent powers, and, if properly worshipped, as giving blessings to the people of the city and state, and preventing the city from falling into chaos.

2.4.4 Cosmological Symbolism and the Chinese Cosmogony

I have demonstrated that Helü Dacheng was seen as having been built both as a replica of the universe and as a cosmic centre. I will further show in section 2.5.1 later below that this scheme is further enhanced by the symbolism of the city gates. At this moment, however, I have to pause for a while to emphasise that it is important not to confuse the modes of cosmological thinking revealed in the records of the building of Helü Dacheng with the cosmological attitudes of many other cultures. Let us illustrate this crucial point by referring to assumptions made by Eliade, (1959) who seeks the general pattern of specific characteristics of the religious experience. "The discovery or projection of a fixed point - the centre - is," he declares, "equivalent to the creation of the world." (Op.cit. 22) For Eliade, an unknown and unoccupied territory must be consecrated so as to become an inhabited one, a cosmos:

> By occupying it and, above all, by settling in it, man symbolically transforms it into a cosmos through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony. What is to become "our world" must first be "created," and every creation has a paradigmatic model - the creation of the universe by the gods. (Op.cit. 31)

For many other cultures, these statements appear to have some validity indeed; but they are utterly inapplicable to Chinese experience, simply because, for the Chinese, man and the universe are uncreated. This probably unique phenomenon in Chinese cosmological thought is stressed by Mote, (1971:17-8) who has presented

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125 See, e.g., *Bin Tui Lu*, vol. 8 and *Wuli Tongkao*, vol. 45: "Jili," no. 45: "Sheji." Johnson (1985b:365) claims that the oldest text in which a "city god" is identified by name is a fragment from the *Nan Yongzhou Ji* 南雍州記 of the first half of the sixth century. But Ma Shutian (1990:240) maintains that the first temple of a *chenghuang* deity was built in A.D. 239 in the Wu area. Cf. CH, 1980:533.

himself as one of the few fore-running scholars advocating conscious awareness of a "cosmological gulf" between China and the West:

> The basic point which outsiders have found so hard to detect is that the Chinese, among all peoples ancient and recent, primitive and modern, are apparently unique in having no creation myth; that is, they regarded the world and man as uncreated, as constituting a cosmos having no creator, god, ultimate cause or will external to itself.

"The genuine Chinese cosmogony," Mote (op.cit. 19) continues, "is that of organismic process, meaning that all of the parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic whole and that they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process."[126]

Thus, for the Chinese (at least for the classically educated), the discovery or projection of a fixed point was equivalent not to the creation of the world but to the *finding* of the world order; and the settlement - a house or a city - turns out not to be "the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony," (Eliade 1959:56-7) for nothing is really created in the world, and the world was not created either. (Needham 1956:290) Rather, the universal organism uncreated but generated from Nature itself, whose every part, by a compulsion internal to itself and arising out of its own nature, spontaneously performed its functions in the cyclical recurrence of the whole, was mirrored in human society by a universal ideal of mutual good understanding; (Needham 1956:290) and it was only by imitating this universal organism that the cities were constructed in the cosmic order. As we read in the *Yi Jing* (vol. 7: "Xici," A; vol. 8: "Xici," B):

> Therefore as nature produced the divinational things [tortoise-shells and milfoils], the sages formulated them; as Heaven and

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126 A similar statement made by Needham (1956:582) more than a decade earlier runs:

> The Chinese world-view depended upon a totally different line of thought. The harmonious co-operation of all beings arose, not from the orders of a superior authority external to themselves, but from the fact that they were all parts in a hierarchy of wholes forming a cosmic pattern, and what they obeyed were the internal dictates of their own natures.

Graham (1986:30ff.; 1989:12, 203, 332ff.) also plainly states that there is no cosmogonic myth in pre-Han literature, merely a blank of pre-history before the first, legendary emperors; that the myriad things were universally conceived as not created but generated by Heaven or by Heaven and Earth; and that the most developed cosmogony in early Chinese literature, in the *Huainan Zi* and *Yi Jing*, for instance, is characterised by the conception of the cosmos as evolving by division along a chain of binary oppositions.

> Earth produced changing processes, the sages imitated them; as the auspicious and ominous signs descended from Heaven, the sages made symbols of them. . . . In great antiquity [people] lived in caves in the wild countryside. Later the sages converted the caves into buildings, with beams at the higher [position] and eaves at the lower [position], to withstand the wind and rain.[127]

In Chinese experience, therefore, the religious moment (in the broadest sense of the word) - in this case, the founding and consecrating of a city - did not imply the cosmogonic moment at which the God creates the world, as Eliade advocates, but rather the typical moment in the natural rotational process, and the moment of the early sage kings' work following the order of Heaven.

2.5 SYMBOLISM OF THE CITY GATES

Great attention was paid to the symbolism of the erection of the city gates of Helü Dacheng and long explanations of them are contained in almost every ancient document about this city. To some extent the emphasis on the form and construction of the city gates derives from the fact that in the Chinese city the walls with gates were the first architectural features to be built, and that it was within them that the frame and internal ordering of the city tended to be fixed. The construction of the gates, they being vehicles of passage from the one space to the other, was a most serious business indeed, as Granet (1930:238) has recognised. Therefore, a heightened symbolic significance was inevitably embodied in the city gates, not only in that it was usually expressed in massive constructions whose size far exceeded that necessary for the performance of their mundane functions of granting access and affording defence, as in Helü Dacheng, where towers are said to have been built on top of two of the eight land gates in the wall of the *dacheng*, and on top of all three land route gates and one water gate in the wall of the *xiaocheng*; (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2) but also through the elaboration of the naming and decoration of the gates in correspondence with their positions and directions. The city gates, by virtue of their symbolic meaning, not only distinguished, but also linked the inside with the outside of the city and the state, this world with the world beyond - with the cosmos.

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127 Similar passages can be read in many other documents, e.g. *Muo Zi*, vol. 1: "Ci Guo," and vol. 6: "Jie Yong," B; *Huainan Zi*, vol. 8: "Ben Jing," vol. 13: "Fan Lun" and vol. 19: "Xiu Wu;" and *Li Ji*, vol. 21: "Li Yun," no. 9.

We have already discussed the general cosmic symbolism embodied in the establishment of the city gates in both Helü Dacheng and the Yue capital. Now it is time to investigate the specific implications incorporated in some of the city gates. One of the outstanding gates of Helü Dacheng was Chang 閶 Gate, said to have been built in the north section of the west wall, which, as the character of the gate's name itself denotes, symbolises the Gate of Heaven (*tianmen* 天門). It was constructed in order to open up and let in the wind of the Changhe 閶闔,[128] which is one of the eight winds from Heaven, and thus to let in the heavenly *qi* ("cosmic breath"). (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4) Similar symbolic representation is claimed to have been applied in the Yue capital as Fan Li "constructed in the west by north [of the inner city wall] a tower with dragons with spreading wings on it so as to symbolise the Gate of Heaven." (Op.cit. vol. 8)

Changhe is the name of the first gate leading to Heaven and also the gate of the celestial *Ziweigong* which, as has been discussed earlier, is at the centre of the universe and in which the High God resides. The notion of the Changhe as the Gate of Heaven seems more prominent in earlier times in Chu 楚 in the South, as a stanza in the poem *Li Sao* 離騷 by Qu Yuan 屈原 (*c.* 340-278 B.C.) in the anthology *Chu Ci* reveals:

> I asked the gatekeeper of the High God to open the Gate [of Heaven],
> [He] leaned against the *changhe* and looked at me.[129]

Xu Shen holds that the term *changhe* was used in Chu to denote any gate or door in general.[130] (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 12A) It is very probable that notions similar to those present in Chu were to a degree also embodied in the life of the people of Wu

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128 The term *changhe* has two denotations. It denotes one of the eight winds from Heaven, believed to be coming from the north-west. (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 13B; cf. section 2.4.1) It is also the name of the first gate leading to Heaven and thus the gate of the celestial Ziweigong 紫微宮 (lit. "Purple Forbidden Palace"). (Op.cit. chap. 12A)

129 Wang Yi 王逸 of the Eastern Han explained, "*Changhe* is the Gate of Heaven." (*Chu Ci Zhangju*, vol. 1: "Li Sao")

130 This aspect is more symbolically significant than confusing, in that, since every house, temple, or city could be regarded by archaic man as the cosmos in which he actually lived, the gate or door of his abode could then be analogous to the gate of Heaven and his abode be a replica of the universe. The multiple homologies, among cosmos, land, city, temple, palace and house, emphasised the same fundamental symbolism: each one of these images expresses the existential experience of being situated in an organised and meaningful world.

and Yue which, as neighbouring states of, and through frequent interaction with, Chu, shared most of its customs and religious activities.[131] I would therefore suggest that the application of the idea of the Changhe to Wu and Yue's city gates may have been in a genuine mode of cosmological symbolism at the time of the building.[132]

The topic gains yet more interest as we read further in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, (vol. 4) "The reason for establishing [in the south by east of Helü Dacheng] the Snake [*she* 蛇] Gate[133] is to symbolise the Gate of Earth [*dihu* 地戶]." Again a similar symbolic gesture appears in descriptions of the Yue capital: "In the south-east a stone funnel was set up to symbolise the Gate of Earth." (Vol. 8) The notion of the Gate of Heaven in the north-west and the Gate of Earth in the south-east, may closely relate with the mythical account of the cosmological idea, which certainly derived from the natural phenomena observed from the geographical position in China. That is, on the one hand, the sun and the moon are certainly seen as moving from east to west, and the inclination of the polar axis and the celestial bodies as rotating around the Pole Star in the north; on the other hand, the altitude of the terrains in the south-east is generally lower than of those in the north-west. Therefore in the *Huainan Zi* (vol. 3: "Tianwen Xun") we read,

> In ancient times Gonggong 共工, striving with Zhuanxu 顓頊 to be world-ruler, with anger smote Mt. Buzhou 不周. The pillars of Heaven were broken, and the guy-ropes of Earth ruptured. Heaven leaned over to the north-west, hence the sun, moon, stars and planets shift [in that direction]; and Earth became empty in the south-east, and hence the waters and dust flow in [this direction].[134]

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131 Cf. *Han Shu*, vol. 28B: "Dili Zhi," no. 8B.

132 It seems to have been only in later periods that the term *changhe* was used in the naming of other cities' gates in the west by north of their walls, e.g. that of the city of Luoyang 洛陽 during the Jin 晉 and of the city of Yangzhou 揚州 during the Tang 唐, (Cf. *Wen Xuan*, vol. 21: "Yong Shi" by Zuo Si 左思 [*c.* 250-305] with Li Shan's 李善 [*c.* 630-689] commentary; *Jiu Tang Shu*, vol. 17A: "Ben Ji": "Jing Zong") and in denoting the main gates of the royal palace. (Cf. *Sanfu Huangtu*, vol. 2: "Han Gong")

133 The snake is one the twelve animals (*shengxiao* 生肖) which respectively correspond to what are known as the twelve Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支), and with the positions in twelve directions. Cf. *Lun Heng*: "Wu Shi" Section and "Yan Du" Section. In the "Yan Du" Section, for example, we read, "*Chen* 辰 corresponds to dragon, *si* 巳 corresponds to snake, and the positions of *chen* and *si* are in the south-east." Whether the idea of correlating the *shengxiao* and *dizhi* with positions/directions emerged before the building of Helü Dacheng, or at the time of Zou Yan in the third century B.C., or later in the Han, I do not as yet know.

134 Also cf. *Lun Heng*: "Tan Tian" Section; *Bo Wu Zhi*, vol. 5.

Commenting in the *Zhou Li* ("Diguan Situ," vol. 10: "Da Situ") on a passage describing how to determine the centre of the earth, Jia Gongyan declares that "Heaven in circular form covers and Earth in square form carries." He quotes this from the *Hetu Kuodi Xiang* 河圖括地象, a document which has long been lost:

> Heaven is not fully filled in the north-west, Earth is not fully filled in the south-east. The north-west is the Gate of Heaven, the south-east is the Gate of Earth. The Gate of Heaven does not have limit upwards, the Gate of Earth does not have limit downwards.

By symbolising the city gate in the north-west as the Gate of Heaven and the gate in the south-east as the Gate of Earth, the city could be interpreted as a replica of the cosmos at the very axis of the universe. In this sense, the city gates seem to have been viewed as equivalent to the cosmic openings through which communication passed between this world which was seen as existing in a cosmic order, and the numinous world above and below. The city itself therefore functioned as a link between the three cosmic planes.

2.5.2 Cosmology and Politics

Politics was, as it still is, expressed through symbolism. (Kertzer 1988:2) Since the survival of the state was closely related to its success in the earthly world of contest between rival states, the state's intention of gaining an upper hand over its foes was unsurprisingly manifested in the cosmic symbolism elaborated on its city gates. The most salient enemies of Wu were Chu and Yue, as the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 4) records:

> Helü intended to expand westward and defeat Chu. Chu was in the north-west, therefore [he] established Chang Gate in order to open up the *qi* 氣 from Heaven, and gave it another name - the Gate of Defeating Chu [*po-Chu* 破楚].[135] [He] intended to expand eastward and annex Yue. Yue was in the south-east, and therefore [he] established She [lit. "snake"] Gate in order to subdue that enemy state. Wu was in the *chen* 辰 position which corresponds to that of dragon, hence on the south gate of the inner-enclosure wall [*xiaocheng*] the roof corners [of the tower] were bent upwards in the form of a stickleback, so as to symbolise dragon horns. Yue was in the *si* 巳 area, which corresponds to the position of snake, hence on the south gate [i.e. She Gate] of the wall of the city proper [*dacheng*] was placed a wooden snake facing north, so as to signify

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135 In 506 B.C., setting out from Chang Gate, Wu's army led by Wu Zixu joined with Cai's 蔡 forces to initiate a major attack on Chu. Within ten days, Chu's capital was captured and the king of Chu fled to Yun 郧, remaining there until Qin 秦 dispatched a relief army to help Chu. (Cf. *Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 54: "Duke Ding 4th Year" and vol. 55: "Duke Ding 5th Year")

the affiliation of Yue to Wu.

The implication in the symbolic construction of She Gate of Helü Dacheng was said to have been countered by Yue, by means of a Gate of Thunder (*lei* 雷) which was erected in its capital, and wherein a huge drum was set.[136] These symbolic implications in the construction of the city gates must not be interpreted as primarily concerned with practical matters *plus* the addition of some cosmic significance, nor as the superstitious expressions of the king's political ambitions, for kings' ambitions or actions were *themselves* expected to follow the pattern of the universe and thus to be in harmonious correspondence with the cosmic order.

The gates were the thresholds which evinced the solution of continuity in space immediately and concretely. Hence their symbolic prominence. Therefore, it should not be surprising to us to discover that ceremonies could be performed there, as we read in the *Zuo Zhuan* (vol. 10: "Duke Zhuang 25th Year") where it says that in the autumn of 669 B.C. when the state of Lu 魯 suffered severe flooding, sacrifices were offered at both the altar of earth and the city gate.[137] We can also understand why when Song 宋, leading the forces of other princes and dukes, conquered Zheng 鄭 in the winter of 698 B.C., they burned down Qu 渠 Gate of the Zheng capital, and carried the rafters dismantled from Zheng's Ancestral Temple back to rebuild Lu 盧 Gate of its own capital with them. (*Zuo Zhuan*, vol. 7: "Duke Huan 14th Year") The passage certainly emphasises the symbolic significance of the Ancestral Temple and city gate to these two states in both defeat and victory, rather than considerations of the timber quality of those rafters or the shortage of building materials in Song territory.

2.5.3 Legends

In the mind of the ancient Chinese, the naming of an artefact had to have an acceptable reason behind it, so that it could be justified logically and historically; in other words, the proper link between name and what is named was held crucial in the matter of putting the world in order. This predilection seems to have been very

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136 Cf. *Han Shu*, vol. 76: "Zhuan," no. 46: "Wang Zun" with Yan's commentary; *Shui Jing Zhu*, vol. 40: "Jianjiang Shui;" SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai," quotations from the *Luoyang Jiujing* 洛陽舊經.

137 Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 criticised the sacrifice of animals in this circumstance as inappropriate, and explained that in case of natural disaster, precious silk woven goods should be offered rather than animals.

much associated with one of the Confucian intellectual preoccupations in governing society, that is, the correspondence of name and reality.[138] Language was viewed as embodying its own reflection of the true order, and if language were not used in ways which conformed to its correct implicit meanings, the entire human order would become disjointed. (Schwartz 1985:92) Consequently, a discrepancy between name and reality was seen as one of the sources of conceptual disturbance, for it was evidence of breakdown at the top, and "a world without order" was seen as its result. (Mote 1971:49) This may have been part of the reason for the fact that it was the names of the city gates of Suzhou, rather than their form and style, that were always taken as one of the major topics of description and argument in local gazetteers of all periods of history.

Apart from the two most prominent gates - Chang 閶 and She 蛇 - that we have discussed in cosmological terms, all other gates had specific names for which certain explanations, disputable though they have always been, are documented. Although the names of these gates were not directly and explicitly linked to the cosmic scheme on which the city was built, they became symbolic carriers of the legends and historic events that were always regarded as integral part of the *raison d'être* of the city. I have already argued that the construction of city walls and moats can be interpreted as carrying a symbolic meaning of defending the city against any invasion from the outside, including both human and demonic attacks. This interpretation may to some extent be applied to the building of the city gates as well. Another city gate of Helü Dacheng, Pan 盤 Gate in the south-west wall, was for instance viewed in later periods as having been distinctive in its decorations on the theme of aquatic beings. In the *Wudi Ji* we read, "[It] was named in antiquity Pan Gate. [On the gate] were carved wooden coiling dragons [*panlong* 蟠龍] to guard that point and subdue Yue."[139] (Also cf. *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. 1: "Menming") These dragons may turn out, in the minds of the locals, to have been of a rather special kind known as the *qiu* 虯[140] which, according to the *Shuowen Jiezi*, (chap. 13A) is a small dragon (*longzi* 龍子) with horns, and could thus be the same animal theme as

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138 Confucius expressed this as the need to "rectify names" (*zhengming* 正名). (See, e.g., *Lun Yu*, Section. 13: "Zi Lu," no. 13)

139 It was also said that the land and water routes there criss-crossed in such complicated and tortuous patterns at different levels that it was termed *pan* ("coiled" or "tangled"). (Cf. *Wudi Ji*; *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. 1: "Menming") I would rather regard this account as too far-fetched an explanation.

140 In the *Taiping Yulan*, vol. 183, a passage from the *Junguo Zhi* is quoted: "The Qiu Gate is Wu's great city gate."

taken by the natives in the South as the pattern of their tattoos[141] so as to avert harm from aquatic beings. Could these small dragons of specific type have been regarded as the city gate's guardians, which it was hoped barred entrance both to human enemies and to demons and the powers of pestilence?

Now let us turn to Xu 胥 Gate. It was presumably in the west wall of the city. (See Figure 2-4) Both the *Yue Jue Shu* and the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* mention this gate without explicitly explaining the source of its name, and partially-informed speculations thus seem to have been inevitable. The most popular one is associated with Wu Zixu 伍子胥, a prominent minister of the state of Wu. Li Zonge 李宗諤 in his *Xiangfu Tujing* 祥符圖經, a local gazetteer written in the early eleventh century but long lost except for quoted fragments, claims that "the house was located here of Wu [Zi]xu, who was later granted the right of suicide after forcefully remonstrating [with the king of Wu]; his eyes were picked out and hung over the gate. That is how it gained its name." (Cited in the *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") This account probably derived from the legend contained in the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (cf. vols. 5 and 10) that Wu Zixu asked before his "granted death" that his head be put on the south gate of the city so that he could watch the occurrence of what he had vigorously warned of - Yue's eventual coming and conquering Wu. But this explanation was later denounced by many as a fabrication on the ground that the building of the city and its gates was conducted by Wu Zixu, and the naming of them must have been accomplished at the time of completion of their construction, so that it is unlikely that the naming of the gate of Xu took place after Wu Zixu's death thirty-three years later. (See, e.g., *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi")

A seemingly more logical explanation was afterwards put forward. According to the *Wudi Ji*, the main text of which was compiled in the Tang, the gate was given the name of *xu* simply because it was the place originally occupied by Wu Zixu's house. This view was also accepted by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1041-1100) (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Menming") and Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193). (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 3: "Chengguo") In fact, scholars of the late imperial era cast doubt even on this latter account. Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-1524) for example, questions the ethical possibility that Wu Zixu as a minister of Wu could have named the gate after himself. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") He suggests instead, as many others have preferred to believe, and by reference to a passage in the *Yue Jue Shu* (vol. 2), that the name must have come from the location of Mt. Guxu 姑胥 to the south-west, to

141 Cf. section 1.1.2.

which an ancient road led from this gate.[142]

Jiang 將[143] Gate and Lou 婁 Gate in the east wall are also mentioned in the *Yue Jue Shu*, (vol. 2) but again no explanations are given. Yet a consensus seems to have been reached that the name of the gate, Jiang, was acquired because of the tale that Helü ordered the legendary artisan, Ganjiang 干將, to forge swords at this place.[144] Lou Gate obtain its name from an old name of a nearby locality around which a county, Lou, was later established. (See, e.g., *Wudi Ji*)

The names of the two gates in the north wall were closely related to the events of the conflict between the states of Wu and Qi 齊. The east one was called Qi, and the story around the naming of this gate appears to have been unanimously accepted. After defeating powerful Chu, Helü planned to attack Qi in the north. To avert the onslaught of Wu, which was at the zenith of its power, Duke Jing 景 of Qi sent his daughter to Wu as a hostage; and Helü later had her married to Wu's crown prince (Fuchai's elder brother). The princess was so young and missed her home state so much that she wept day and night and became ill. Helü then ordered the building of a city gate tower on the north wall, from which she could look out to distant Qi. The gate was accordingly named Wangqi 望齊 (lit. "Gazing at Qi") or Qi.[145]

The west gate in the north wall was known as Ping 平. The *Wudi Ji* claims that it was from this gate that Wu's main armed forces led by Wu Zixu set out to "quell" (*ping* 平) Qi, and the gate was thereafter named accordingly. This is a disputable speculation which garners no support from other records about the event. Since in the *Yue Jue Shu*, (vol. 2) Ping Gate is also called Wu 巫 Gate, another line of explanation seems more plausible: Wu was the old name of the gate, which derived from the name of a famous sorcerer, Wu Xian 巫咸, who was believed to have been

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142 Cf. *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi;" *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 18B: "Chengchi;" SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai." The gate is therefore occasionally called Guxu in the *Yue Jue Shu*. Mt. Guxu is also known as Mt. Gusu 姑蘇, a name that later consequently began to be applied also to the city and the prefecture.

143 It was also known as Jiang 匠, which was regarded by Zhu Changwen as an erroneous transcription. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Menming")

144 See section 2.3.3.

145 Cf., e.g., *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4; and *Shuo Yuan*, vol. 13: "Quanmou." This, however, did not mitigate her homesickness, which led to her early death, so the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (ibid.) claims. Before she died, the princess requested that she be buried on the peak of Mt. Yu 虞 (in present-day Changshu 常熟) in the north so that she could see the state of Qi forever. Helü, grieving over her death, buried her according to her wishes.

buried nearby. The character *ping* 平, somewhat similar in form to *wu*, was probably a scribal error for the latter.[146]

Whether and how much these accounts reflect actual historic events is less important than the fact that these gates were imbued with various specific meanings in the early centuries of the city's history. The way in which city gates were recorded in almost all local gazetteers of Suzhou appears to have been typical of the Chinese way of perceiving cities: under the entry for every gate, there is not even a description of its form and materials of construction but an extensive explanation and argument about the source of its nomenclature. Thus, the significance of these artefacts to the Chinese always lay more in their supposed origin, and in various transcendental or spiritual meanings they transmitted, than in their physical traits.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have examined a number of salient features of the Wu capital, Helü Dacheng, believed to have been constructed in 514 B.C. on the site where the city of Suzhou stood throughout subsequent history. The examination is largely based on two Eastern Han writings, namely the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* and *Yue Jue Shu*. Due to both the scarcity of archaeological findings and the lack of written sources contemporaneous of the time of building, the information extracted from these two documents can hardly be regarded with any certainty as evidence of the city in the late sixth century B.C. Instead, it should appropriately be viewed as a construct devised by the authors of the two works, on the basis of various sources at their disposal, to express Wu's historical struggle for survival against other states, most notably against the state of Yue. The prominent features of the notional re-construction of Helü Dacheng that have been discussed can be categorised into two interrelated aspects. One consists of its physical features, including the site and form of the city, the measurements of its walls, and the spatial disposition of its principle structures. The accounts of these features by the authors of Eastern Han and even later documents may have constituted a combination of what had been transmitted, either textually or orally, or both, to these authors, with what they themselves perceived of the city in their time. The other aspect hinges upon the idea

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146 Cf., e.g., *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Menming;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 3: "Chengguo;" and *Pingjiang Jishi*.

that the city was built as a cosmic centre, a symbolism of city building that was most probably composed from a diversity of sources. It might have drawn elements from the local traditions; it could have been influenced by the culture of Central China as it had developed from as early as the Shang period; and, more importantly, it must have involved the cosmological synthesis of the Han.

Because the main purpose of this thesis's being to present a study of the development of the urban form and space of the city of Suzhou, from which a number of important characteristics of urban transformation in pre-modern China will be sketched, this chapter has not aimed at investigating *how* this construct was devised by the Han scholars, but at *what* was exhibited in it. The main reason for this choice of methodological orientation is that, whatever the authenticity of the various elements of this construct may prove to be, it was later constantly being viewed as a source of historical authority and continued to inform the city's further development. In other words, for the rise and decline of this city in later historical periods, what the physical city really looked like in the late sixth century from an archaeological point of view, what kind of symbolism was actually applied to its construction, and to what extent the Eastern Han construct of the beginning of the city truly reflects the reality of half a millennium earlier, are less important than the content of this construct itself which was later *believed* to have been true.

In order to place the study of this Han version of the history of the building of Helü Dacheng in the context of urban history, I have first briefly described some of the conventions of city building in Central China in the Shang and early Zhou, and discussed the canonical principles of city planning prescribed in the *Zhou Li* that were characteristic of the Han ideological system and cosmological synthesis. Then I have examined in detail the history of the building of the Wu capital as that history was re-constructed by the authors of the Eastern Han documents. Emphasis has been laid on the cosmological symbolism of this city. The construction of the city walls was regarded as the first step towards the establishment not only of the state but also of an idealised order - an order of both social and cosmic significance which would hopefully lead the king of Wu to hegemony. The walls were built in a symbolic manner, following celestial and terrestrial formations; the eight land gates of the city were arranged in such a way as to symbolise the eight winds from Heaven, and the eight water gates to imitate the eight "intelligent attributes" of Earth. Thus the city may be interpreted as a replica of the universe, and the parallelism between the macrocosms and the microcosms may be seen as thus having been established.

This cosmic scheme was further enhanced by the symbolic correspondence between two particularly important gates, namely Chang Gate symbolising the Gate of Heaven in the north-west, and She Gate symbolising the Gate of Earth in the south-east. The application of this symbolism, closely associated with an ancient cosmological conception, was largely brought about by their nomenclature correlating with their positions. The city in this way became a cosmic centre. A similar cosmic scheme is claimed to have been applied to the building of the Yue capital. It was supposed to be at this centre that the king of Wu was striving for power in the historical context of the conflict between rival states.[147]

It could be said that the history of Helü Dacheng and the Yue capital during the late Spring and Autumn period was characterised by an intense struggle between the states of Wu and Yue, which ended with Wu finally being conquered and annexed in 473 B.C. I have argued that any struggle against human enemies was viewed as isomorphic with that against demonic forces, and any attack from without as threatening to uproot the city and thus the state from the cosmic centre and turn it back into chaos. Hence the struggle against the enemy was in a sense regarded as an endeavour to protect the established centre of the cosmos. Goujian was, as is said, determined to rejuvenate his state and wipe out the humiliation of a total military defeat by Wu and his three-year hostageship in Helü Dacheng. For this matter, he consulted his ministers, and, as the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (vol. 10) claims, declared:

> What Wu did in the past was immoral and evil. [They] damaged my Ancestral Temple, and razed my Altar to the Gods of Earth and Grain to the ground, with the result that blood sacrifices could not be offered [to ancestors and gods]. [Therefore] I am determined to vie [with Wu] for the cosmic centre, . . .

The existence of the city, the orderly cosmos, was symbolised by the ritual maintenance of the Ancestral Temple and the Altar to the Gods of Earth and Grain, and the real victory over enemies could only be gained when the cosmic centre was taken over, whereupon the ruler's purpose in life could be realised. The human and supernatural matters were virtually part of each other.

Due to the lack of archaeological evidence and the purposefully thematic nature

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147 Similarly, it was also at the cosmic centre that the king of Yue, after the completion of his capital, chose the auspicious day and moment to restart his government in the Hall of Light (*mingtang* 明堂), so that the centrality of his position could be ensured. (*Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 8) The cosmic spot in space and the cosmic point in time coincided to verify the authority of the king and thus guarantee the fate of the state.

of the *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, this received history of the construction of Helü Dacheng can only be regarded as "semi-legendary". Nevertheless, it is these accounts of a legendary nature that, as a sort of authority from the past, conceptually formed the bases for the city's later transformation. In the opening passage of the "Chengchi" section in the *Wuxian Zhi*, (vol. 18B) this aspect has been explicitly stated:

> As a famous capital and prestigious city, [it] assembles the cultural relics. At its beginning, [Wu] Zixu, following the forms manifested in Heaven and the processes taking place on Earth, constructed the city walls and dug the city moats for [the capital of] Wu. [Whereas it] was meant to strengthen [the state] at that time, [the form of the city] then became the *fixed institution* [in its urban transformation] from antiquity to the present time. (Emphasis is mine)

The glories of the city in later periods have always been seen as having derived their impetus from the past, especially from the legends of its foundation, as Zhu Changwen sums it up, "Had not the wise created it at the very beginning, and the able followed on [with it], how would [the city] have been able to reach such [perfect] status?" (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Chengyi")

CHAPTER 3 ASPECTS OF THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES IN THE IMPERIAL ERA

Helü Dacheng's period was short-lived. From its earliest construction by Wu Zixu in 514 B.C. to the conquest of the state by Yue in 473 B.C., the city as the capital of Wu had existed for only forty-one years. The site of Helü Dacheng has been seen as occupied successively by the dynastic and present-day urban settlement that we call the city of Suzhou, and the recorded history of this early city provided a conceptual and possibly physical basis for its later development in the imperial era. Along with the social and political innovation at the time of the Qin unification in the third century B.C. there occurred a profound change in the nature of China's city system. Urban history in the imperial era was characterised by both its remarkable continuity and its great complexity. In this thesis, the city of Suzhou is treated not only as an integral part, but also as a particular instance, of that history. For this reason, this chapter presents a discussion of a number of important aspects of the general development of cities in imperial China, so that a larger historic context is formed, in which the transformation of the city of Suzhou will be placed. Problems of dispute as to how some of these aspects should be interpreted exist among students of China's urban history. In order for me to examine the city of Suzhou more closely, it is also necessary to introduce these problems and to clarify precisely where I stand. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a general framework that will be extended in the following four chapters, and upon which an appropriate historiographical approach to the study of Suzhou is based.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I consider some general attributes of the regional and local cities as the centres of imperial administration, by focusing on the variability of their form in space, and on the fundamental differences in cosmological conceptions between the imperial and regional-local capitals. The second section can be regarded as a continuation of the first, in the sense that I discuss how urban development in imperial China should be interpreted. I do this by introducing a number of salient features in the transformation of urban planning and governing principles during the Tang-Song and Ming-Qing periods, and their consequences in the characteristics of later urban form and space. Third, I discuss the development of the distinctive urban-rural relationship in imperial China. The symbolic role played by the city walls in society is emphasised, and a

preliminary explanation of the distinctive antithesis of urban stability and transformability is attempted. An understanding of these particular features in China's urban history largely determines the approach of this present study. Fourth and finally, I summarise some general points presented in this chapter about the nature of China's cities, which should be kept in mind when the city of Suzhou is studied.

3.1 REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL CENTRES

There seem to be two tendencies observable in studies of city form and space in imperial China: (1) making sweeping generalisation about *the* Chinese city as if there were few changes or variations in time and space; and (2) concentrating upon *only* imperial capitals as the focus of the study, and regarding other cities - notably regional and local administrative centres - merely as miniatures of imperial capitals. Such approaches overlook the fact that cities in imperial China were significantly differentiated in time and space, and that fundamental distinctions, as far as cosmological conceptions in imperial China are concerned, existed between imperial capitals and other cites.

3.1.1 Imperial Administrative Hierarchy

Apart from imperial capitals, the history of their location and design being characterised by the persistence of a long tradition of city cosmology,[148] there existed hundreds of cities spread across the country, which housed regional or local governmental seats. In the history of Chinese field administration, the constant, and also basic, administrative unit of the empire was represented by the institution of the *xian* 縣 (usually translated as "county"), the capital of which constituted the lowest level of the urban hierarchy through which the central government directly exercised its authority. This governmental instrument, along with that of the *jun* 郡 (or *fu* 府 in later times), usually translated as "prefecture", a higher administrative unit above the *xian* since the Qin unification, can be regarded as a

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148 Yet not a single capital in Chinese history ever achieved the ideal city form based on that archetypal cosmological symbolism which was supposed to be followed rigorously. Only the Ming capital or, as Liu Zhiping (1987:8) asserts, the Yuan capital, at present-day Beijing was in very close accord with the canonical cosmology of city building. This aspect has extensively been discussed by Wright (1977). For the history of the planning of Chinese imperial capitals, see Steinhardt (1990).

legacy of the late Zhou. Whereas localising and dating the origin of the *xian* have been a problematic issue,[149] it seems certain that an embryonic form of the so-called Prefecture-County System (*junxian zhi* 郡縣制) already appeared during the Warring States period - a system of local administration subsequently formalised by the Qin unifiers, (cf. Gernet 1982:64-5, 106; Fairbank 1992:56) the principal pattern of which was to last for the whole imperial era.

Although the structure of those higher administrative units above the *xian* was often highly complex, and their names varied over time, the standard hierarchy of province-prefecture-county was constructed, as Skinner (1977d:304) observes, in a manner familiar to us from most modern administrative arrangements. Skinner (Ibid.) has also summarised the pattern of governmental organisation in this system: the territory of a province was entirely made up of prefectural-level units, and the capital of one of these also simultaneously served as the provincial capital. Similarly, the territory of a prefecture was entirely made up of county-level units, and the capital of one of these also simultaneously served as the prefectural capital. Thus, every provincial capital had a minimum of three administrative seats known as *yamen* 衙門, one each for the provincial governor, the prefect, and the county magistrate; and every prefectural capital had minimally two *yamen*, one each for the prefect and the county magistrate. Moreover, the capital of a prefecture which was economically and culturally advanced and densely populated, often served as the capital of more than one county, as in the case of

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149 Lü Simian 呂思勉, in his *Zhongguo Guoti Zhidu Xiaoshi* 中國國體制度小史 (A Brief History of the Chinese State System) published in 1929 (Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju, contained in Lü 1985:410-44), maintains that the institution of the *xian* was originated in the Eastern Zhou period in two situations: (1) when territory was annexed from a subjugated state, as those of Chen 陳, Cai 蔡 and Bugeng 不羹 after their conquest by Chu 楚, became *xian* of Chu; and (2) when several moderate settlements (*ju* 聚), along with their cultivated lands (*xiang* 鄉), were merged to form an administrative unit in such powerful states as Qin 秦. Bodde suggests in 1938 that the institution of the *xian* as administrative units was established firstly in Qin, while Creel argues that it was initiated in Jin 晉. (Wheatley 1971:179-82) Basing himself on the works of scholars such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, Wheatley (1971:179) suggests that the original composition of the character *xian* might probably offer some etymological support to the postulated mode of origin of the term as a designation for recently annexed territory. For an etymological interpretation of the term, cf. *Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chaps. 9A, 12B and 13A with Duan's commentaries. However, at least from the point of view of Han scholars, the term *xian* in the early Zhou period denoted the central royal zone (*wangji* 王畿) measuring one thousand *li* 里 in diameter, and later also meant one of a hundred divisions of this central zone. (Cf. *Li Ji*, vol. 11: "Wang Zhi," no. 5; *Yi Zhou Shu*, vol. 5: "Zuo Luo," no. 48; *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 6B) If the application of the term to the Zhou governmental institution was prior to its application to the newly gained territory by those powerful states of the Spring and Autumn period, the etymological explanation of the latter case would seem questionable.

Suzhou prefecture, where there were three county *yamen* in the city from 1724,[150] and where the county boundaries ran through the city, and the *yamen* of each county was located in the appropriate sector. Thus during the second half of the Qing period, for example, when the provincial government of Jiangsu 江蘇 resided in Suzhou, the city housed five *yamen* (one provincial, one prefectural and three county), plus one imperial examination office of the province, two *yamen* of the textile industry of the south east and some other offices in charge of specialised regional business regulated by the state. This situation not only shows the city's political importance but also matches up with the economic strength of the prefecture.

3.1.2 Nature and Form of Regional and Local Cities

Let us now discuss a few problems in interpreting the general traits of these regional and local cities. I would start the discussion by quoting two passages from an article entitled "City as a Mirror of Society: China, Tradition and Transformation," written by Rhoads Murphy (1984) who, as a distinguished urban historian of China, ardently advocates impartial studies and open-minded understandings of Chinese culture. In this article, Murphy critically reviews China's urban development in three selected historical stages, namely (1) what he calls "the traditional/imperial model," (2) the Western presence in the treaty-port cities around the turn of this century, and (3) the urbanisation from the Communist revolution onwards. He concludes by arguing that, in the midst of political and economic changes, Chinese society will remain distinctive, and so will the cities which it builds and shapes. The reason for my selecting the two particular passages given below lies not only in the fact that the points presented in them are crucial for the present discussion - some being valid if more clarified, and some representing certain dubious conceptions, but also in my acknowledgement that the achievement of this work is beyond doubt.

With regards to cities in general in the imperial era, Murphy (op.cit. 188) writes:

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150 They were the *yamen* of Wu 吳, Changzhou 長洲 and Yuanhe 元和 counties. Wu county was the earliest one, established in 222 B.C.; the seat of Changzhou was set up in 696 to govern half of the territory of Wu county. This situation remained for over a millennium until in 1724 when part of the territory of Changzhou county was put under the jurisdiction of the newly established county Yuanhe. (See, e.g., *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Jianzhi Yan'ge")

> The traditional-imperial Chinese city . . . lasted in fact, essentially unchanged, well into the present century in many parts of the country; many of its outlines are thus still observable, . . . These traditional cities were primarily centres of imperial authority imposed in a uniform plan to a varied landscape, symbolic monuments of the power and majesty of the Chinese state and of Chinese culture over which it presided.[151]

He then talks about the county capitals:

> While the *hsien* [i.e. *xian*] city was, of course, the commonest, it reflected, on a smaller scale, the superior hierarchical models of the provincial and national capitals, whose managerial and cosmic rôles were exercised over progressively larger spheres, until, in the case of the imperial capital, it encompassed "all under heaven," the name by which the Chinese called their empire and its surrounding, but far lesser, tributary states. (Op.cit. 190)

Three important questions should be mooted with regard to Murphy's statements cited above. Were cities in imperial China uniform in plan? Should regional and local cities be perceived as imperial capitals writ small in cosmological terms? And how should urban development be interpreted; or more specifically, should changes in the nature and general arrangement of urban space of these cities be regarded as essential? I shall try to answer the first two in this section; the last question will be dealt with in the two sections that follow.

To the first question, I would take a more cautious approach than the one reflected in Murphy's statement that the cities in imperial China were "imposed in a uniform plan to a varied landscape."[152] It seems possible that, in order to

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151 See also a similar statement in one of Murphy's earlier papers (1954:353) in which the author treats the cities as centres of change on the basis of comparisons between Europe and China.

152 The form and layout of the local cities is also depicted by Needham (1971:71-3) in a similarly undifferentiated way, together with a diagrammatic plan of an ideal case (op.cit. 73 fig. 747):

> They were planned as rational fortified patterns imposed from above upon carefully chosen portions of the earth's surface. Hence they did not necessarily grow, indeed they shrank as often as they expanded, while the exoskeleton of walls remained in being to be refilled with flesh perhaps during a later dynasty. . . . It is probable that all Chinese cities were laid out, since the Chou [Zhou] period, [sic] in a rectangular manner closely resembling that of the Roman *castra*. There was the great east-west street corresponding to the *via principalis*, and the great north-south one cutting it at right angles like the *via decumana*. . . . In any case, the most typical form of a Chinese city would be as seen in the adjoining sketch (see Figure 5-3) [sic]. The palace of the feudal lord, and afterwards the yamen of the civil official, were usually in the

illustrate effectively his central point that these cities, having continuously functioned as administrative centres, bore the strong "imperial imprint," Murphy makes this statement in an over emphatic manner. In another work that he produced exactly thirty years ago, he declares, "local defensive terrain, such as at Chungking [i.e. Chongqing 重慶], occasionally made this common plan unsuitable, but the stamp of governmental uniformity is nonetheless apparent." (1954:353) Yet I would say that variations of the cities in their actual form and plan should be viewed as having existed more than "occasionally" if we talk about Chinese urban phenomena as a whole. Such variations were largely brought about by local topographical conditions, economic situations, and the specific process of city construction. This feature has succinctly been dealt with by Mote (1977:107-8) who, in terms of the basic trends of urban form and space transformation, sees that cities in imperial China appear to have fallen into three types: (1) the planned, regular city; (2) the unplanned, sprawling large town; and (3) the hybrid created when some degree of planning was superimposed on the natural city, but too late to be thoroughgoing.[153] He then points out a general schematic differentiation of the form of cities between the South and the North - the degree of irregularity in form was greater in the South where topographical conditions were complex, than in the North where the cities were older and therefore further from their presumed origins as natural cities.[154]

> 'front' or southern part, with the market-place situated more to the north. There universally followed from the main crosswise plan a rectangular grid system of streets, dividing the city into blocks, each of which was called a *li* or *fang*. Often these also were separated by walls and gates, constituting areas under the authority of a subsidiary of the city magistrate.

Some general descriptions of the internal spatial organisation of Chinese cities by Murphy, on the other hand, appear more questionable, in the sense that not only are urban features characteristic of different historical periods and of different regions mixed up, but some elements of other civilisations, such as the "plaza" (the application of this particular word to Chinese cities is probably an off-handed use of language), are also included.

153 This classification is certainly a simplified schema, as Mote (ibid.) also makes it clear that all Chinese cities were in some sense "hybrid," for they were in varying degrees multi-functional throughout imperial time, with the two most clearly identifiable functions being the economic and the administrative (or "dynastic," or "political-military"), either of which demanded the support of the other at a certain stage of development.

154 Considering the vast territories that Chinese culture penetrated and the variety of regional and local subcultural traditions, the arrangement of regions with regard to different pace and characteristics of urban development is a complicated task. Whereas Skinner (1977a:11) has divided the territory of agrarian China except Manchuria and Taiwan into eight macroregions "as the 'natural' vessels for territorially based socioeconomic systems," the conventional, simplified dichotomisation of the regions into the North and South would be sufficient for the present argument. The non-

Uniformity in plan and layout was indeed one of the characteristics of many cities on North China Plain, where variations must have occasionally occurred. The plans of two exemplary cities in the late imperial period, Pingyao 平遙 and Taigu 太古 situated in present-day Shanxi 山西 province, are presented in Figures 3-1 and 3-2. By contrast, cities in the South, as Liu Zhiping (1987:9) has noted, markedly varied in form, and geometrical regularity was never a common urban feature. The comparatively geometrically regular form of the city of Suzhou appears to have been one of a few notable exceptions among the cities south of the River Yangzi. This is abundantly evidenced both by the city maps contained in numerous local gazetteers, and by their present configurations that most directly bear the marks of their past, but to present such evidence (for example, maps of hundreds of cities) in this thesis falls beyond the scope of its topic. The plan of a typical city of the North was common only in certain regions, and should therefore not be extended to account for all cities in China. Ideally, of course, any China's city would probably have been built on a plan of square or rectangular form. Such a preference is reflected in the way in which some of the irregularly formed cities were presented by the authors of local gazetteers. The city of Shaoxing 紹興 in the late imperial period, for instance, was often mapped in oblong plans (see Figures 3-3 and 3-4), although its shape was highly irregular in reality (see Figure 3-5). Another example of this concerns the city of Hangzhou 杭州, two contrasting maps of it being shown in Figures 3-6 and 3-7.[155] Yet informative of the Chinese

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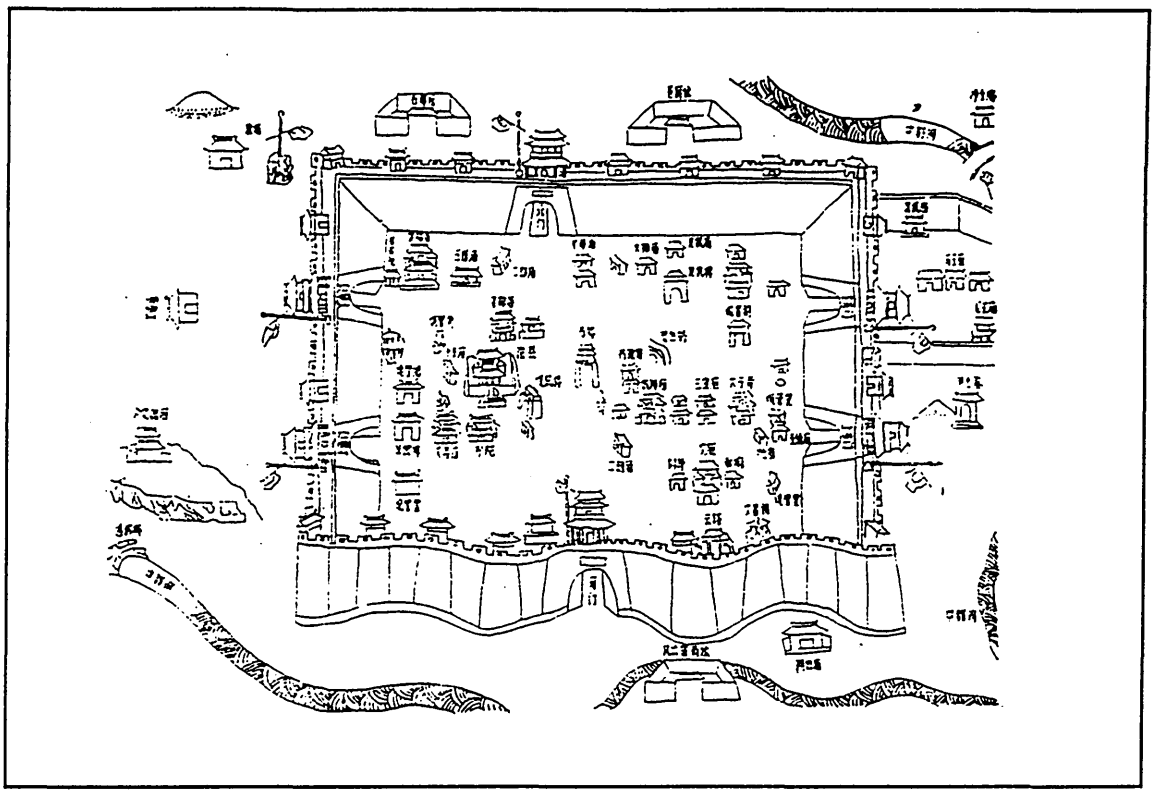
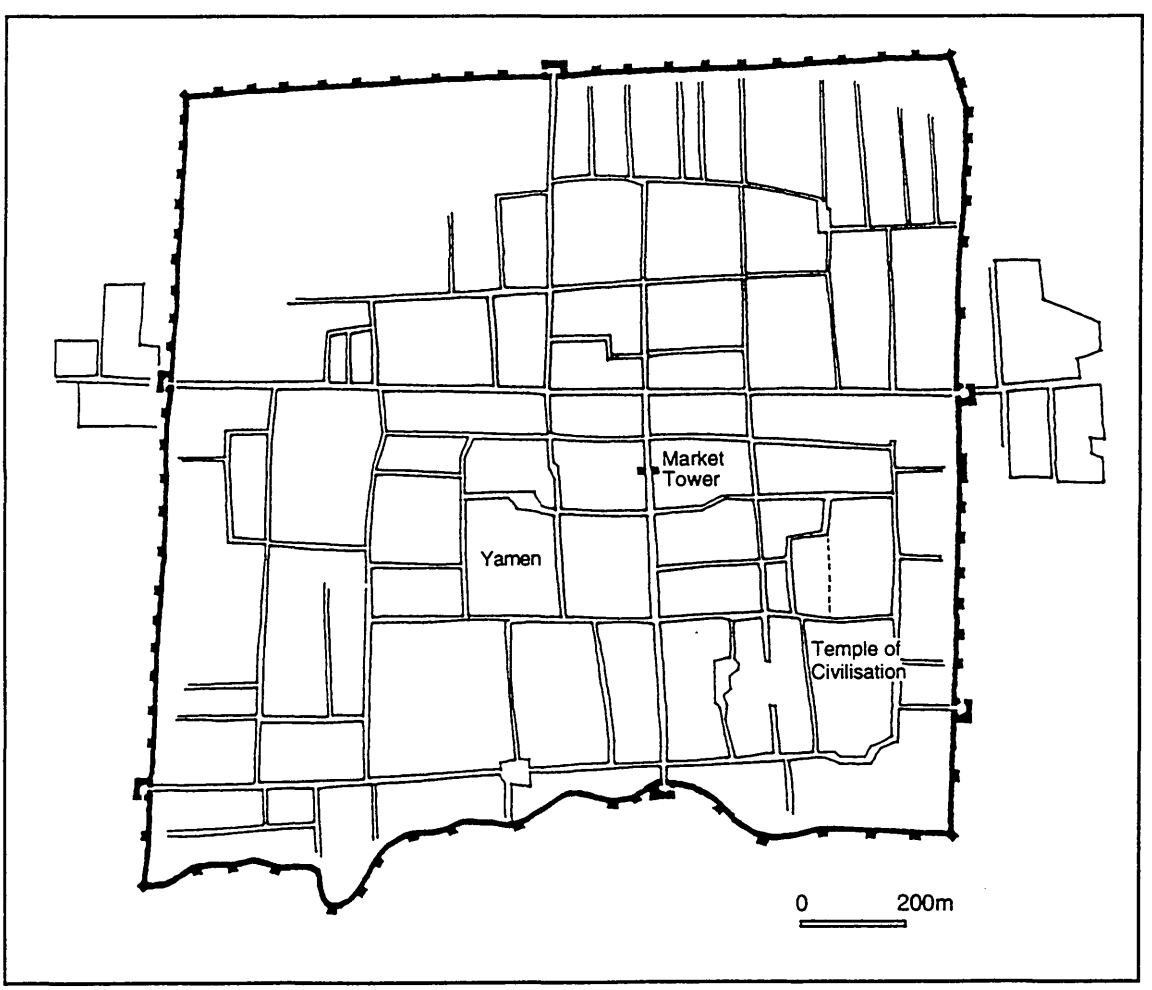
contemporaneity of the construction of the city walls and the establishment of local governmental seats, closely associated with regional variation in social and economic development, was a common phenomenon in many parts of the country. Chen Zhengxiang (1983:59-60) argues that in a city's development, either of the two events - the construction of walls and the establishment of governmental seats - may have occurred long before the other. In the regions of strategic importance or of constant wars, the construction of the walls of a city was usually well in advance of the establishment of a governmental seat, while in the relatively peaceful and secure regions like the South-east, the building of walls may have come much later than the latter.

155 This presentation preference is also acutely noted, though with somewhat different intent, by Steinhardt (1990:146-7) when she discusses the planning of Hangzhou as the imperial capital of Southern Song, then known as Lin'an 臨安:

> The city's actual scheme may be considered irrelevant to the historical record. The Chinese imperial city is supposed to be geometrically perfect. In a case such as Lin'an, in which it was not, illustrations like those from *Xianshun* [sic] *Lin'an zhi* amend fact so that the capital will appear perfect for posterity. Thus the heavenly approved and classically sanctioned plan could transcend transitory earthen timbers and mud-brick walls joined by man. The prepared drawings for *Lin'an zhi* assured that when the material remains of Song Lin'an could no longer be found, the city plan, although fictitious, would ever after be recorded, perceived, and certified as an ideal Chinese imperial city.



(1) Picture map of the city contained in a local gazetteer of 1707. (Dong and Ruan 1981:25)



(2) The city at the end of the Qing. Redrawn from Dong and Ruan 1981:25.

Figure 3-1 The city of Pingyao in present-day Shanxi province.

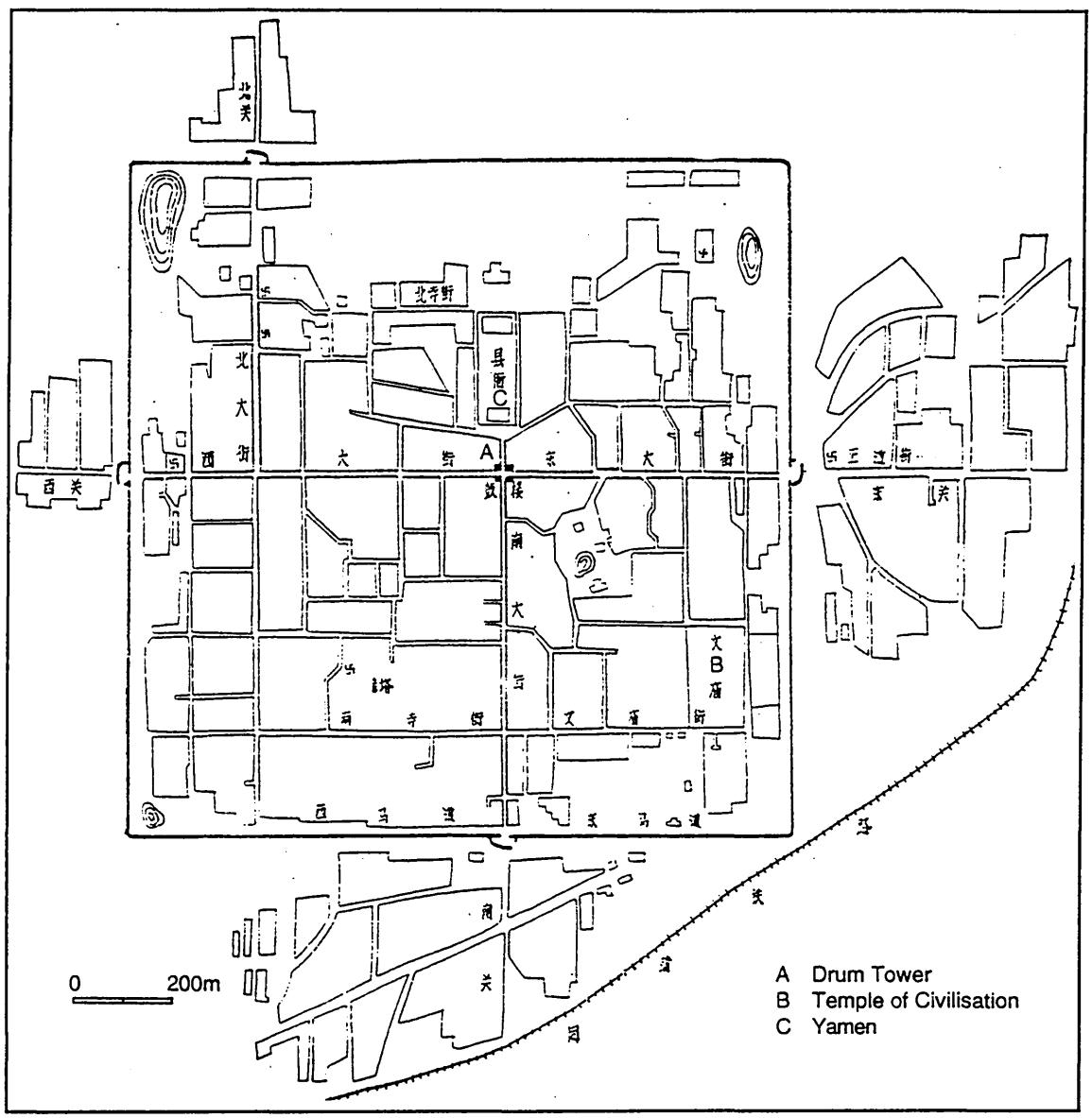


Figure 3-2 The city of Taigu in present-day Shanxi province in 1964. Adapted from TDCGJ 1982:109, fig. 1-7-33.

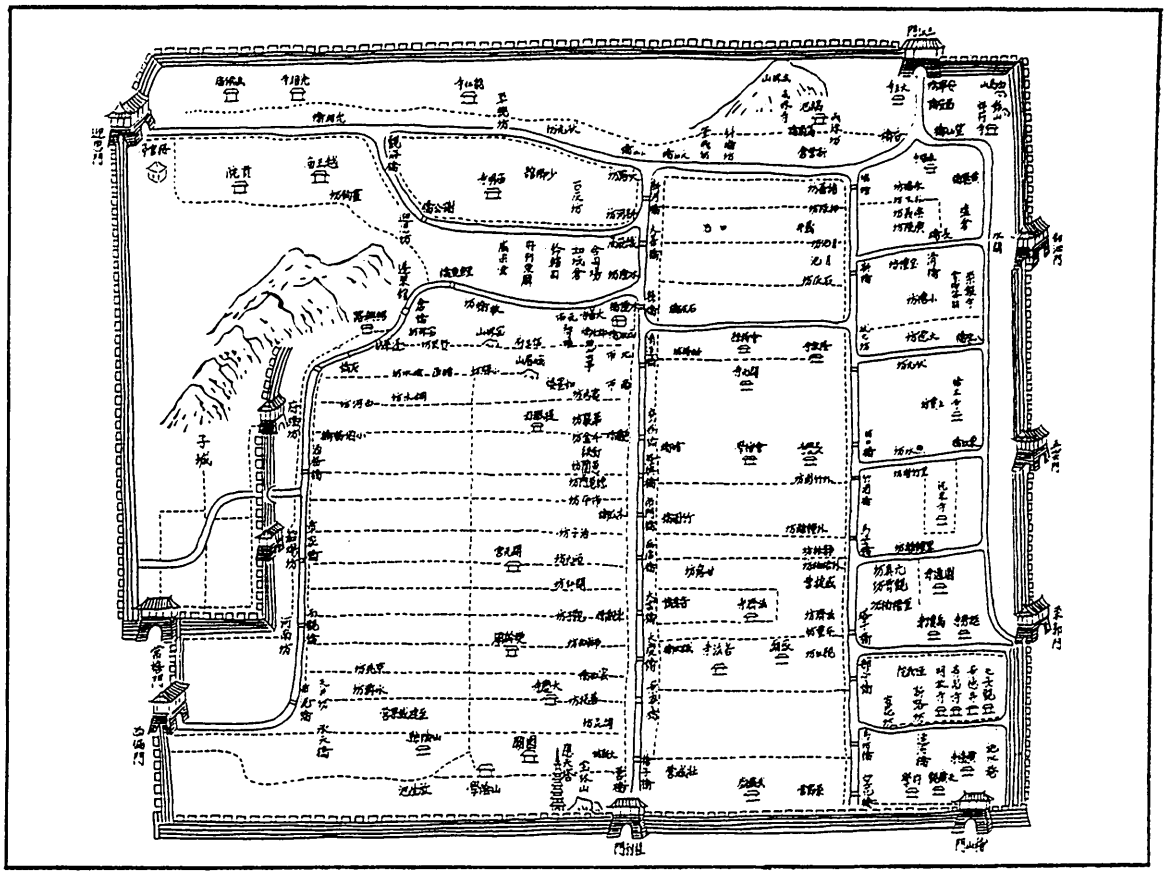


Figure 3-3 Map of the city of Shaoxing during the Yuan period, presented in the *Shaoxingfu Zhi*, vol. 1. (Wei and Xu 1986:22)

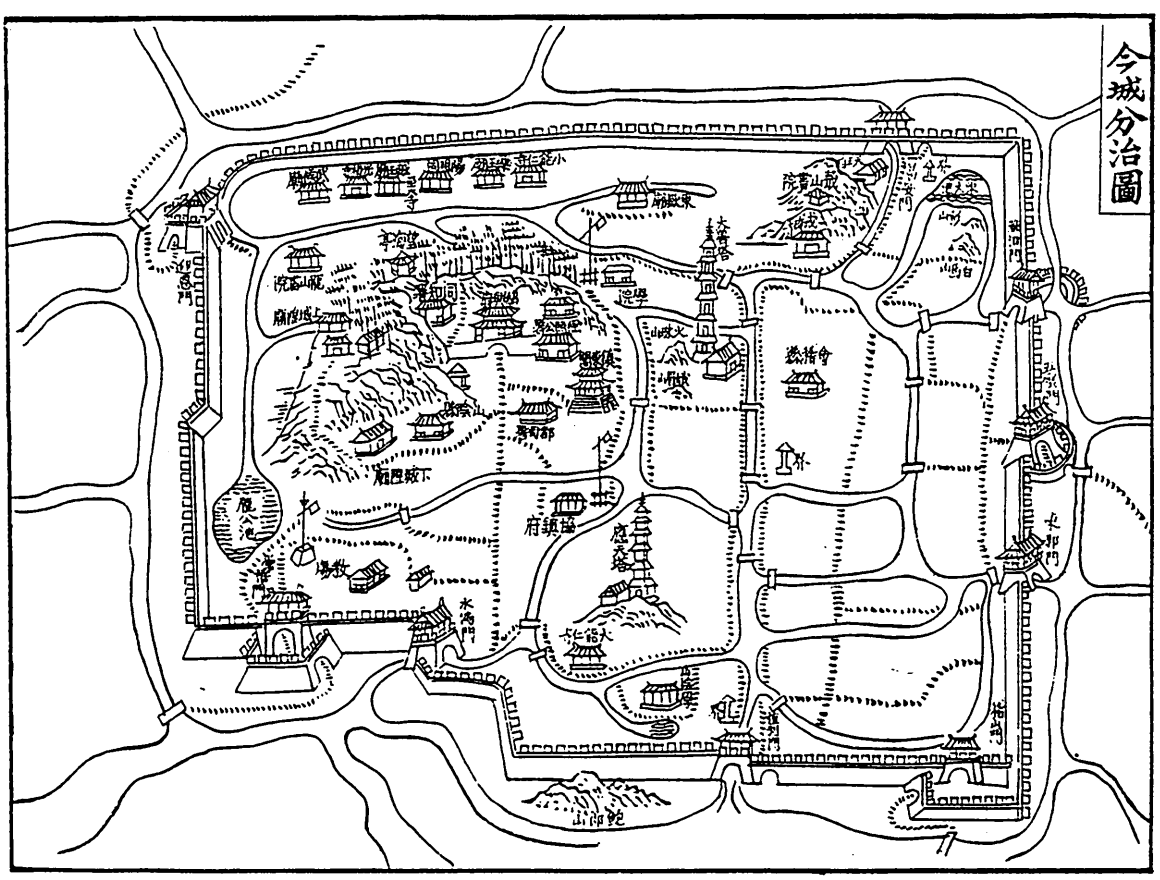


Figure 3-4 Map of the city of Shaoxing in the mid-Qing, presented in the *Shanyinxian Zhi*, vol. 5. (Wei and Xu 1986:23)

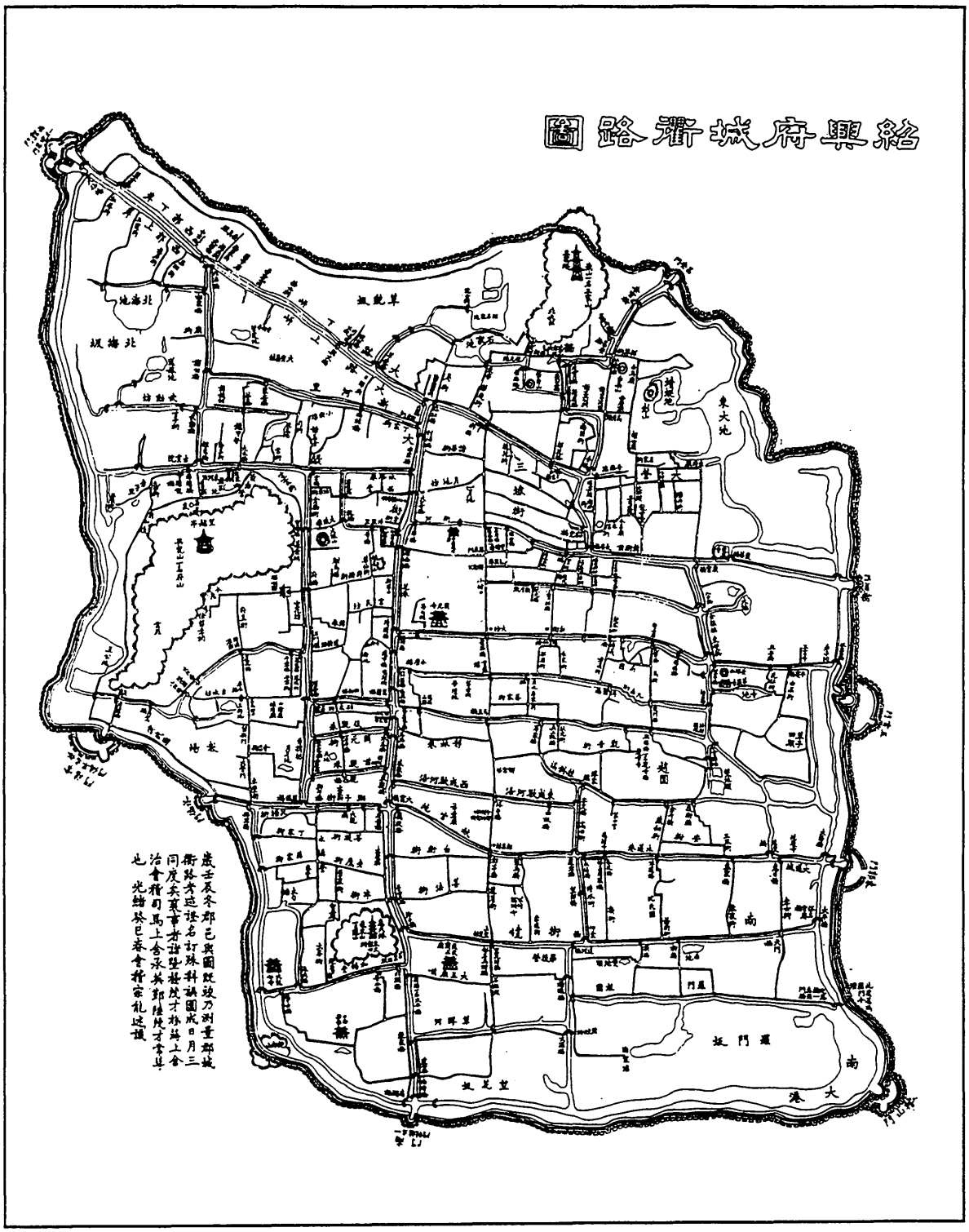


Figure 3-5 Map of the city of Shaoxing produced in 1893. (Wei and Xu 1986:24)

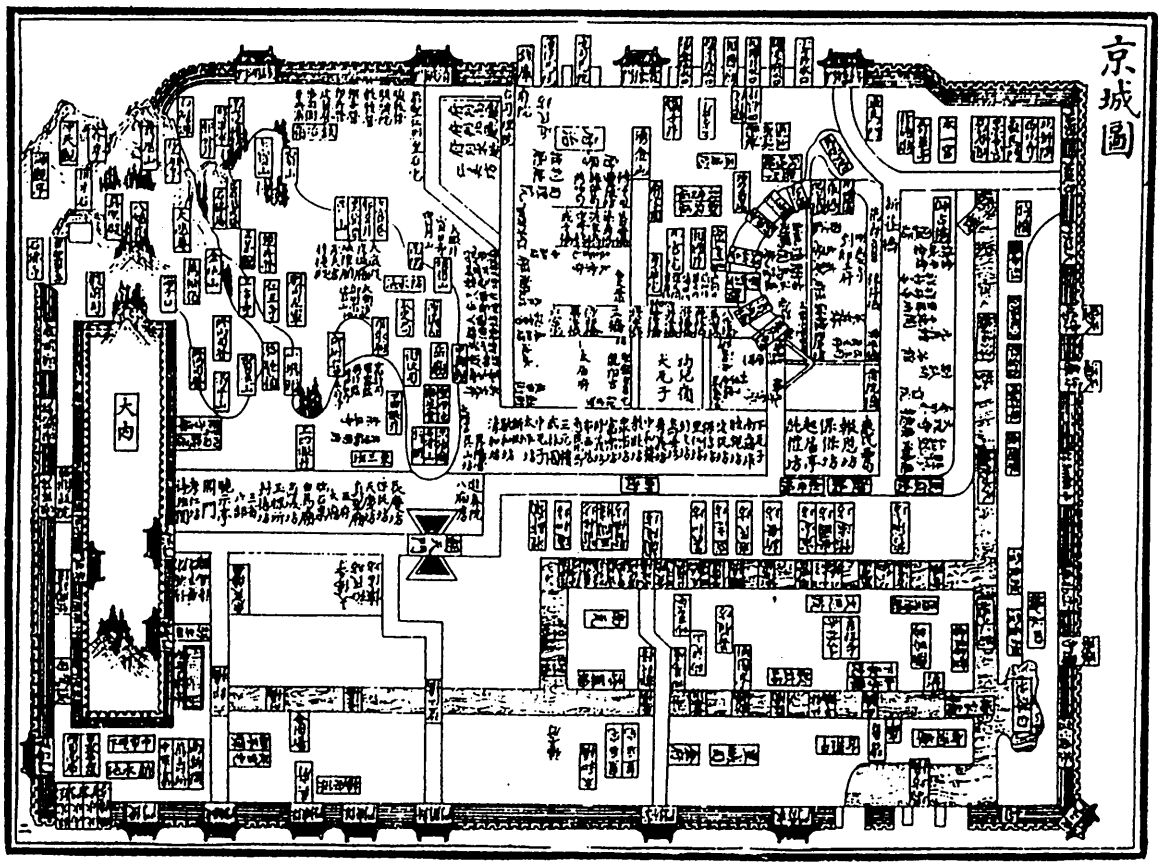


Figure 3-6 Map of the city of Hangzhou (known as Lin'an in the Southern Song), presented in the *Xianchun Lin'an Zhi*. North is to the right of the page.

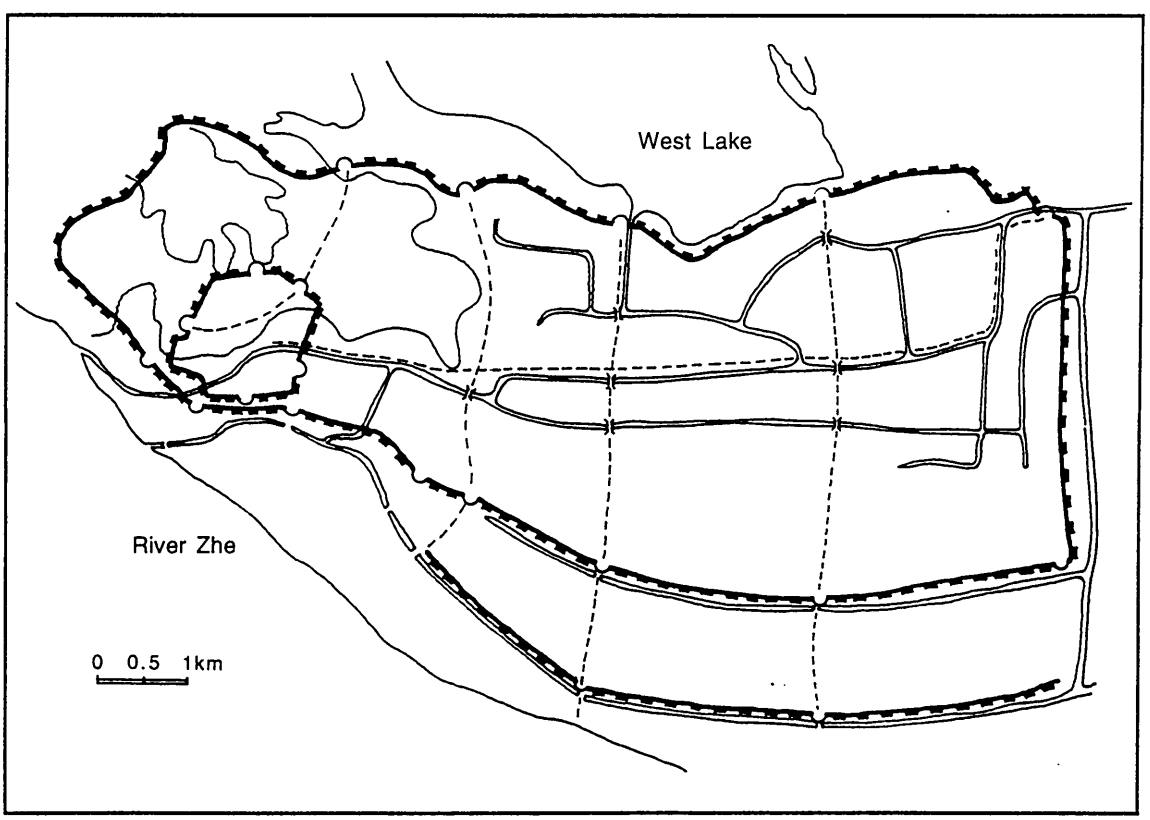


Figure 3-7 Diagrammatic map of the city of Hangzhou. North is to the right of the page. Adapted from TDCGJ 1982:48, fig. 1-6-3.

mentality towards city building as it is, an ideal pattern does not explain the cities in their complexity. A simple, undifferentiated model of "the Chinese city" would not help us understand China's urban experience any better.

A few more words are needed for answering the second question that I have raised in connection with Murphy's statement quoted earlier above; that is, should regional and local cities be viewed as imperial capitals on smaller scales? The hierarchy of the imperial administration in China was developed into a well structured system, and the imperial cosmological symbolism was, to various extents, applied to the imperial capitals. These two facts tend to lead to an easy and seemingly plausible conclusion that the cosmic role of local and regional capitals was the same as that of the imperial capitals but merely conducted on smaller scales. To a conclusion, in other words, that local and regional capitals were endowed with the sacred power emanating progressively to larger spheres in accordance with their administrative jurisdictions, until, in the case of the imperial capitals, "all under Heaven" was encompassed.

However, the validity of drawing a parallel between the hierarchy of the imperial administration system and the hierarchy of cosmological symbolism of cities - if there was one - is very much in doubt. It should be noted firstly that the fundamental implication of the post of regional and local governmental seat is entirely different from that of the imperial throne. The ruler ensconced on the throne was perceived as the Son of Heaven at the pivot of the four quarters, who, in Meyer's (1991:2) words, "was commissioned by Heaven to rule China, pacify the outlying territories, and ultimately to set such a shining example of perfect government that the whole world would come to the foot of his throne and offer submission." By contrast, provincial governors, prefects and county magistrates were merely agents of the imperial authority empowered with the duty to govern the country. If the emperor was ordained on the imperial throne by the Cosmic Order, by Heaven (*Tian* 天), imperial officials were appointed to their posts by the central authority on earth. The fundamental distinction between the imperial throne and the posts of regional and local government thus lies not in the size of their ruled area, but in the symbolic nature of the two categories.

This distinction is most clearly marked by the *de jure* absence in regional and local cities of the unique type of urban structure in Chinese history that was built exclusively in the southern suburb of the imperial capital, namely the Altar of

Heaven (Tiantan 天壇).[156] It was a structure that epitomised by name and by rituals conducted on it the Emperor's revered, unique position on earth as the "cosmic pivot," and what Meyer (1987:116) calls "his mediatorial role" between Heaven and the human world. Therefore, one may proclaim that it is the attribute of the imperial capital as a sacred city to be at the centre of the world, just as it is the Emperor's endowed right to claim that "all [lands] under Heaven are the soil of the King; [all people] within the boundary of that soil are the subjects of the King." (*Shi Jing*, vol. 13-1: "Xiao Ya": "Beishan") Similarly, to regard other cities wherein regional and local governmental seats resided as cosmic centres on smaller scales would appear to be misleading, just as claims of the same nature on the Emperor's soil, even though on smaller scales, would be totally contradictory to the conception and nature of the imperial system.[157]

Furthermore, it is our understanding that the religious orientation to ancestor worship is omnipresent and central to the development of Chinese civilisation. (Schwartz 1985:20-1) Ancestral temples were indeed ubiquitous in settlements at all levels - from imperial capitals, down to regional and local cities, market towns, villages and large houses. They were certainly family-based religious establishments. In the transient world of man, the relatively fixed point on earth, from which one could depart to all directions and to which one could return, would, from the traditional Chinese point of view, be where one's ancestral temple stood, wherein proper worship could be performed. This was the place at which one's true roots would surely be found. Therefore, the centrality of a settlement was to a large extent occasioned by the presence of the ancestral temple as a symbolically dominant structure of the settlement, one which stood for the good of all members of the community, and by the regular worship performed in it. In terms of the rise of the city, Schwartz (op.cit. 21) has emphasised that, if the city in Mesopotamia was centred on the city god or goddess who was a Nature-related deity, in China it would seem to have been centred on the ancestral cults of the royal

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156 For analyses of the architectural aspects of the Altar of Heaven in the southern suburb of Beijing, cf. Liu Dunzhen 1980:347-54 and Liu Zhiping 1987:15-7. For a discussion of its religious significance and the legends associated with it, see Meyer 1991:79-99, 137-43.

157 A related aspect should be stressed, which also reflects the basic difference between the imperial system and the feudal system of the early Zhou. I have mentioned in section 2.2.2.4 that the accomplishment of any enfeoffment was to be symbolised by a prince or duke's taking a handful of earth from the part of the King's Altar to the Gods of the Earth and Grain in the direction of the relevant enfeoffed land. I do not know, and would be surprised, if similar rituals were conducted when an imperial official was about to take up his allocated post.

lineage and the lineages of the associated nobility.

This religious nature of Chinese cities persisted after the Qin unification, but was only present in imperial capitals, in which the royal ancestral temple was always one of the principal urban structures; that is, it was constructed as an important part of the overall scheme of capital city planning. Although the imperial ancestral temple was established exclusively to house the shrine of the predecessors of the royal family, and usually only the Emperor was entitled to lead worship in it, the symbolic implication of the temple reached out to the destiny of the whole world, and thus to the welfare of all people "within the four seas." On the contrary, no regional or local administrative centre, to my knowledge, possessed an ancestral temple as one of its principal urban structures having an overwhelming social and religious influence over the city as a whole, except for ancestral temples built and attended by discrete social groups and families in the city.

The lack of such an urban element in them seems attributable to the fact that, unlike a village or a house wherein all members were identified as having common ancestors, (1) a Chinese city was merely an administrative centre of a regional or local area which was largely rural, and not an entity of its own,[158] and (2) its residents were hereditarily heterogeneous and socially discrete. One may also try to seek a similar symbolic implication in the ancestral temples of regional or local officials to that of the Emperor's, though on smaller scales, by drawing a parallel between the ruling role of the Emperor and the governing duty of the imperial officials. Yet since by the rule of "avoidance," these officials were in most cases not assigned to their home areas, and since their positions and posts constantly changed, their ancestral temples were seldom located in the cities which held their administrative seats, but in their home regions. An official's post and his residence during his assignment were all temporary; what was permanent was his ancestry and the place at which his ancestors were buried and worshipped.[159] If the Emperor claimed that his residence, centred in his capital, was "under Heaven" or "within the four seas," the true home of an imperial official could be nowhere but the place from which he originally came into existence; if the imperial capital was regarded

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158 This nature of Chinese cities has been mentioned or studied by many Western scholars. (Cf., e.g., Eberhard 1962:228, 267; Needham 1971:71-2; Elvin 1973:22, 177; Mote 1973:37-8, 1977:102-10; Murphy 1954, 1984) It brought about some unique urban features and the specific way that the cities functioned, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

159 The distinction between an official's home and the place where he held office is also emphasised by Elvin (1978:85) from a different direction.

as the sacred centre ordained by Heaven, from which the Emperor under his ancestors' very eyes ruled the whole world, a regional or local city was perceived but as a node in the imperial administrative network, at which an official was appointed to carry out his duty under the eyes of the Emperor and his officials at the imperial court, and from which he would possibly, after his retirement or dismissal, return to his homeland where he was rooted and with which he identified. Even if an ancestral temple of an official's family had been set up in the city where he was officiating, it would only have stood for the sake of his family or clan alone, for, like all residents in the city and in its surrounding areas, he was after all a subject of the Son of Heaven.

I am not trying to deny the existence of cosmological conceptions about the urban form and space of cities. Indeed, many cities of long history, especially those which were constructed as state capitals prior to the imperial era, had embedded in them the imprint of cosmological symbolism of various sources. Suzhou is a perfect example of the cities of this kind. Even the cities of later periods often acquired various interpretations in cosmic, or at least, supernatural, terms. It could be argued in a very forceful way that a similar system of "progressive" cosmic role may be found in the organisation of families and clans, rather than in the imperial administrative system. But the essential point here is that, in terms of cosmological simplifications, a regional or local city is not to be regarded as the imperial capital writ small, and that the alignment of a system of "progressive" cosmic role and symbolism with the imperial administrative hierarchy does not hold. This understanding is important for a proper interpretation of the development of regional and local cities in imperial China.

3.1.3 Summary of Conclusions

In this section, I have first presented an overview of the imperial administrative hierarchy which was spatialised in the form of the city system. Walled cities (*cheng*) were primarily centres of imperial authority, as Murphy correctly points it out. Then, by citing a couple of passages from Murphy's (1984) work, I have introduced three basic problems as to how cities and their development in the imperial era should appropriately be viewed in some general terms. An attempt has so far been made at addressing two of these problems. One is that the notion of cities in imperial China having been built in a uniform plan is, from a historical point of view, far too simplistic and misleading. Their form and layout

varied vastly across the land, and the ideal model, more frequently realised in the cities on North China Plain, remained fictitious in many other parts of the country. The other problem that I have discussed concerns a fundamental difference between regional or local cities and imperial capitals. This differentiation is informed by the salient cosmic role of the latter as in contrast to the equality on the cosmological plain of the former at whatever administrative level. In other words, the imperial capital was regarded as *the* city at the centre of the cosmos, whereas a regional or local capital was merely *a* city of certain political and economic importance.

The third problem that derives from the reading of Murphy's work (should the cities in the imperial era be seen as essentially unchanged?) is particularly complicated. It depends on how the word "essentially" be defined. Murphy's statement is valid if it emphasises the persistence of the political function of these cities, as I think it probably does, although there are some implications in his writing of unchanging urban form. The point that I would like to make, however, is that a realisation of the persisting political role for the cities does not mean that, in China's imperial history, urban changes in many other aspects were negligible. In the following section, I shall demonstrate that these changes significantly transformed the spatial organisation of the cities.

3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN SPATIAL ORGANISATION

3.2.1 Urban Market and Residential Quarters by the Late Tang Period

Many large cities had experienced profound changes. A notable example is the process of development of Yangzhou 揚州, a city that rose as the central metropolis of the Lower Yangzi region in the late Tang and Northern Song, but declined when the imperial capital was moved to Hangzhou in the Southern Song. This process was one of the "regional cycles" of urban growth identified by Skinner, (1977a:16-7) during which the economic development, demographic history, and socio-political dynamics of the Lower Yangzi region were associated with the build-up of an urban system centred on this particular apex city and with its subsequent (at least partial) break-down. It was in the Qing period that, as Finnane (1993) observes, Yangzhou again rose as an important regional centre. These socio-economic changes can hardly be regarded as not fundamental to the fortune of this city, changes that are reflected in significant variation of its size and form in history, as we can see in

Figure 3-8. Change in the overall physical form of other cities may not have been as dramatic as that of Yangzhou, but under the cloak of political-administrative function throughout the dynastic periods, they underwent to various degrees socio-economic transformation that altered their regional, or even national, importance.

Yet more important to the present discussion than the fortune of these large individual cities is that their rise and decline, associated with the political and economic dynamics of regional cycles, happened in the historical context of two notable processes of the development of city planning and governing principles as a whole in the urban history of imperial China; namely the urban revolution that took place from the late Tang to the end of the Song, and the urban transformation that occurred in the late imperial period in economically more advanced regions. The fundamental metamorphoses of the city structure and the general arrangement of urban space were brought about in these two process. Since the first process was centred on the collapse of the old ward system of urban market and residence, and since this system derived from the planning doctrines prescribed in the *Zhou Li* and largely remained unchanged until the second half of the eighth century, it seems necessary for me to begin with a short description of the main features in the planning of urban markets and residential quarters before the mid-Tang.

The market quarter, in the form of a walled compound usually with four doorways open to the main streets of the city, functioning as a venue not only for commercial but also for social activities,[160] was tightly controlled by the state. From the *Zhou Li*, we understand that, within the compound, stalls were strictly arranged in ranks (*si* 肆),[161] while goods displayed on the stalls of each rank were rigorously restricted to specific categories. An altar of earth was probably set up, where sacrifice was regularly made by the *yin li* 陰禮 (lit. "female ritual").[162] At the centre of the compound, the main administrative office (*sici* 思次) was established in the form of a multi-storey tower or pavilion (*shilou* 市樓 or *qiting* 旗亭) on which a flag would be hoisted when the market was open, and an auxiliary

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160 In this respect, Wheatley (1971:178) has drawn a parallel between China and ancient Greece and Rome:

> It [the market quarter in the pre-Qin city] combined, in fact, the economic and social functions of the *agora* of the Greek *polis* and the forum of the Roman city, and there remained only a tenuous distinction between these facets of its activities.

161 The term *si* retains several connotations which are related in one way or another to the ancient market: (1) display; (2) exposing bodies in the market after execution; and (3) stalls, shops or workshops. (CH 1980:1963)

162 See section 2.2.2.4.

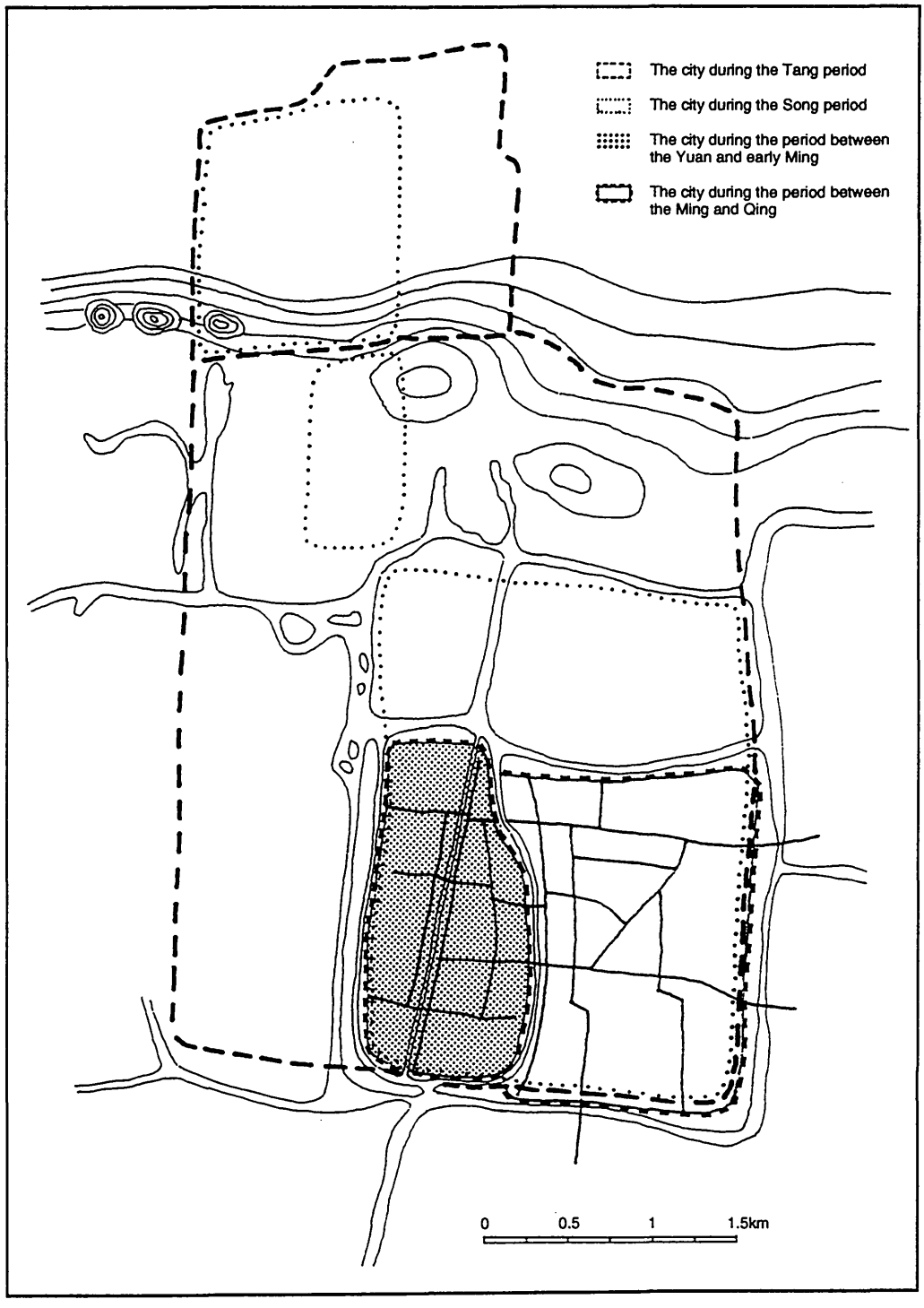

Figure 3-8 Transformation of the urban form of the city of Yangzhou from the Tang to Qing periods. Redrawn from TDCGJ 1982:34, fig. 1-5-9.

office (*jieci* 介次) was also set up to solve minor disputes over transactions. The employment of the market area was arranged into three stages during the day-time, namely, the "morning market" (*zhaoshi* 朝市), the "great market" (*dashi* 大市) and the "late afternoon market" (*xishi* 夕市).[163] Figure 3-9 contains two Eastern Han brick-engraving pictures which clearly depict the spatial arrangement of the market quarter and people's activities in it.

Although the "Kaogong Ji" does not provide us with any information about the Zhou planning system of urban residence, from scattered records preserved in other early documents we understand that the city was divided into blocks, and that urban residence was organised in the form of walled square or rectangular wards known as *li* 里 (or *lü* 閭, or *lüli* 閭里),[164] probably with a gate set on each side. Buildings were arranged along alleys (*xiang* 巷) and sub-alleys (*qu* 曲) within the ward, while an altar of earth was established at its centre. Officials (*lizheng* 里正) were appointed to be in charge of various matters in the ward. No private houses except for those of the high officials were allowed to have entrances opening directly onto the main city roads, and night curfew was normally imposed.[165] It is also very possible that urban residents were segregated in different wards by class and by profession.[166] Zhao (1988:44) argues that the planning system had its origin primarily in military considerations, as indeed we read in the *Zhou Li* ("Diguan Situ," vol. 12: "Xiangdafu"), where it says that "once the city was in serious trouble, residents were then ordered to stay [close to the officials' posts] in their

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163 In the "Sishi" section of the *Zhou Li*, ("Diguan Situ," vol. 14) we read:

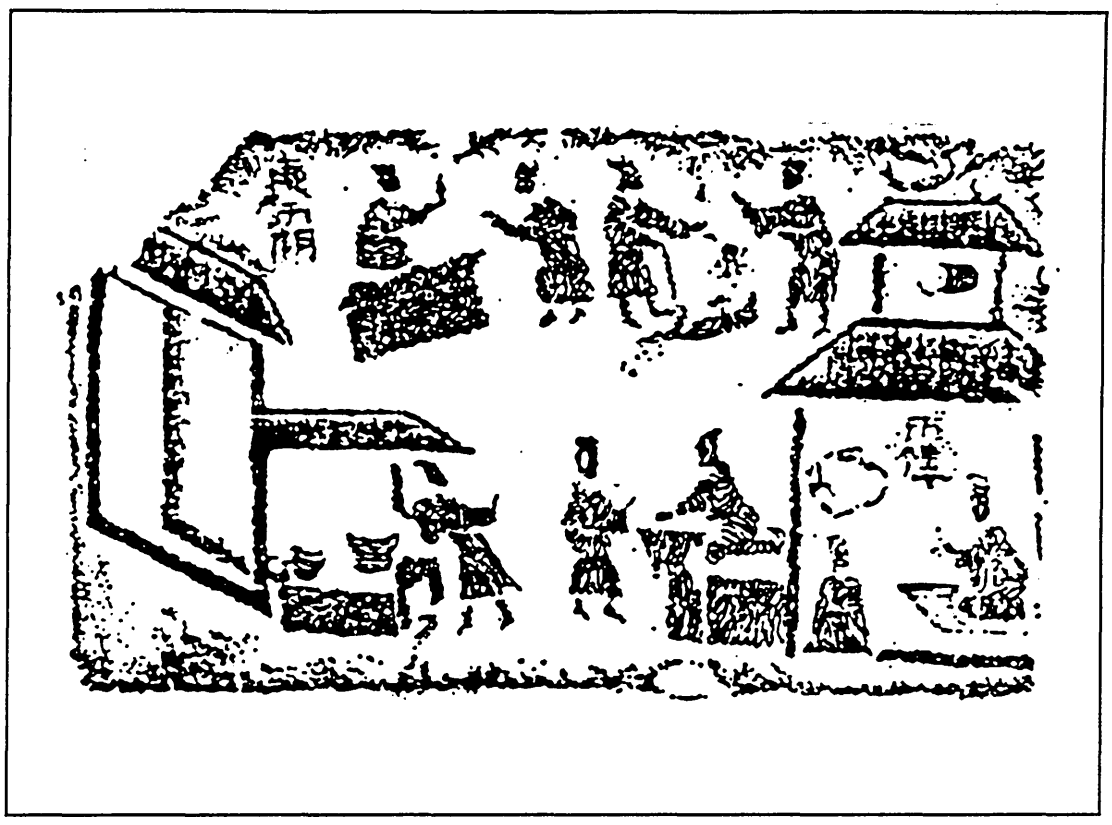
> The great market is held at midday, [and in it] commoners are the main participants. The morning market is held in the early morning, [and in it] merchants are the main participants. The afternoon market is held in the late afternoon, [and in it] male and female peddlers are the main participants.

During the "great market" hour, transactions had to be conducted in the central part of the compound; during the "morning market" hour, in the eastern part; and during the "late afternoon market" hour, in the western part. (Cf. "Tianguan Zhongzai," vol. 7: "Neizai" with Zheng and Jia's commentaries)

164 Both *li* and *lü* meant a unit of residential organisation, which contained twenty-five households, and applied to both urban and rural settlements. (Cf. Mao's commentary on *Shi Jing*, vol. 4-2: "Zheng Feng": "Jiang Zhongzi;" *Zhou Li*, "Diguan Situ," vol. 10: "Da Situ" and vol. 15: "Suiren") As they came to indicate physical structures, the term *li* mainly denoted a residential ward, while *lü* also connoted one of its gates. (CY IV 1983:3146, 3247)

165 See also Balazs (1964:68-9) for a brief description of this feature of the Chinese city, particularly in the Tang period.

166 This discrimination seems to be in conformity with the advocacy recorded in the *Yi Zhou Shu* (vol. 2: "Cheng Dian," no. 12) that "nobles and officials should not mix with artisans and merchants."



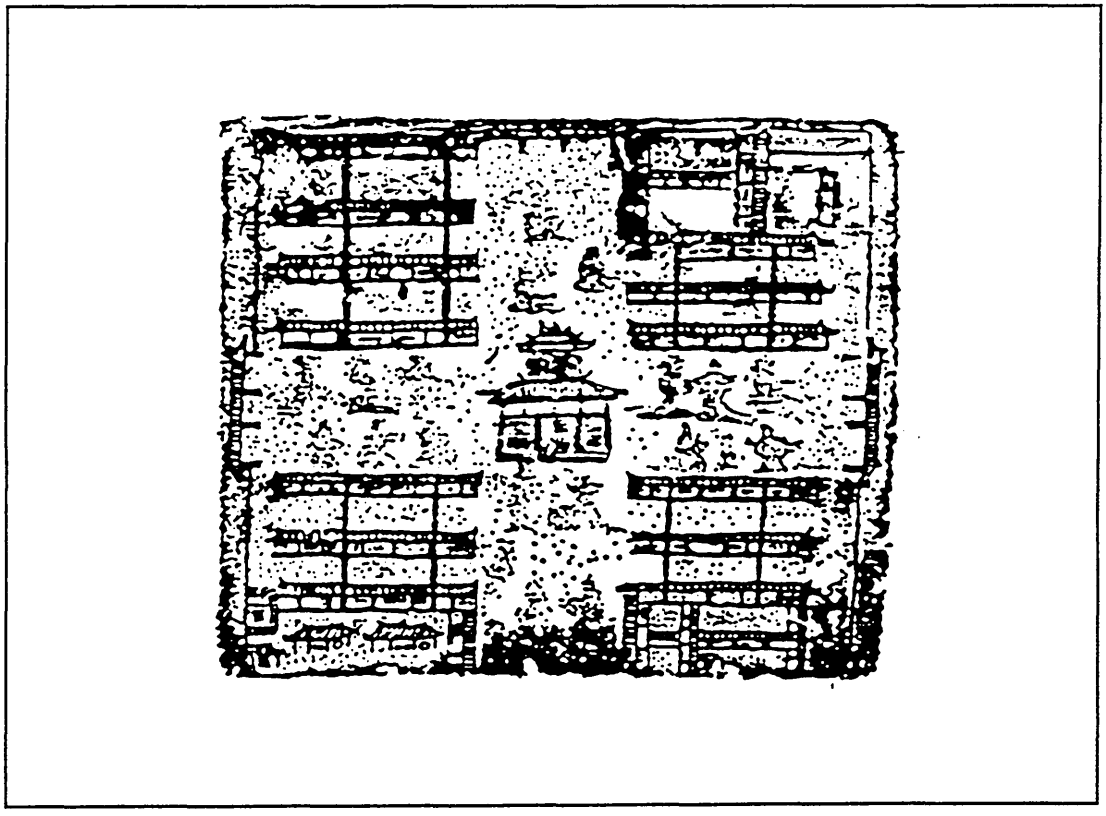


Figure 3-9 Brick-engraving pictures depicting the Eastern Han urban market. (Liu 1973:57, figs. 1 and 3)

own wards, so as to stand by, as administrative decrees were pending." Thus every ward would in case of a siege be a stronghold itself. Figure 3-10 shows the plan of a few residential wards redrawn from a fragment of an engraved scale map of the Tang capital Chang'an 長安, dating from A.D. 1080.

3.2.2 Medieval Urban Revolution

Fundamental urban transformation, starting during the second half of the eight century and culminating during the Southern Song, was probably generated firstly in the urban market, and then directly involved many other sectors of Chinese urban structure, most notably urban residential areas, which gave rise to fundamental changes in urban spatial organisation. This is part of what Elvin (1973:164-78) calls the "medieval revolution in market structure and urbanisation." Elsewhere, Elvin (1978:79) writes about the changing roles for the cities:

> Up to this time [between about 900 and 1200], the large centres had been predominantly cities of administrators and consumers, and the circulation of wealth and goods had depended primarily on the pumping mechanism provided by taxation. Now they also became commercial and industrial centres, in degrees varying from case to case.[167]

Skinner, (1977a:23-4) on the basis of the works by Twitchett and Shiba, has summarised the main features of the institutional changes at this stage of the transformation of market structure and urbanisation, which were accompanied by the increased monetization of taxation and trade, by a growth in the numbers, wealth, and power of merchants, and by a softening of social and official attitudes disparaging trade and the merchant class:

> (1) a relaxation of the requirement that each county could maintain only one market, which had to be located in the capital city;
> (2) the breakdown and eventual collapse of the official marketing organisation;
> (3) the disappearance of the enclosed marketplace, along with the walled-ward system, and their replacement by a much freer street plan in which trade and commerce could be conducted anywhere within the city or its outlying suburbs;
> (4) the rapid expansion of particular walled cities and the

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167 "Major religious centres," Elvin (ibid.) cautiously writes, "seem mostly to have been rural, though sometimes modest towns grew up as the result of fairs held in conjunction with periodic religious celebrations."

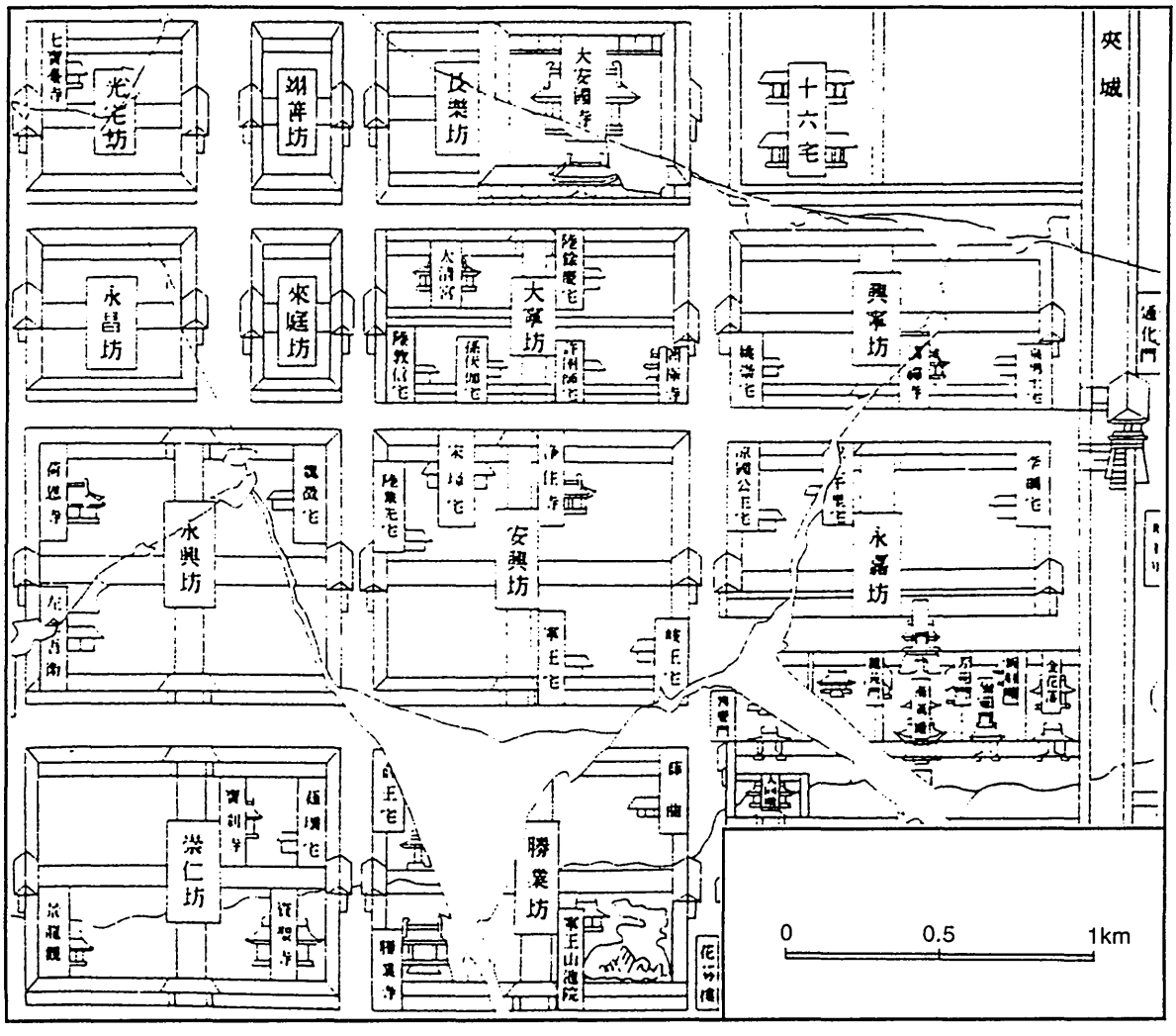

Figure 3-10 Picture map of residential wards redrawn from a fragment of an engraved scale map of Tang Chang'an by Lü Dafang 呂大防 dating from A.D. 1080. (Wright 1977:59, Zhao 1988:49, Cao, et al. 1990:plate 48)

growth of commercial suburbs outside their gates;
(5) the emergence of great numbers of small and intermediate-sized towns with important economic functions.[168]

These changes certainly did not occur suddenly, but were of a gradual process. On the basis of such documents as the *Quan Tang Wen*, the *Tang Huiyao* and the *Jiu Tang Shu*, He Yeju (1986:205-6, 1990:30) has pointed out that, although a number of shops and stalls were recorded as having already been built in as early as the mid Tang in the mid-eighth century around the areas outside the walls of the Eastern and Western Markets in Chang'an 長安, evidence of intensified change is found in the late Tang (*c.* A.D. 828-896). Two tendencies breaching the old rules of urban planning and governmental control were representative of the latter period: (1) shops were set up within residential wards with unauthorised doorways opening directly onto city streets, and (2) urban markets were open in evening hours.[169]

During the Song period, especially in the Southern Song (1127-1279), walled market quarters and residential wards totally disappeared (Liu 1980:163-6) and were replaced by shopping streets of localised business (*jieshi* 街市), and by planned neighbourhoods spatially organised and demarcated with streets and alleys (*fangxiang* 坊巷). Shops as the principal urban commercial facilities were located wherever was economically sensible in the city. Figure 3-11 is a street plan of a section of the city of Suzhou taken from a picture map engraved on stone in 1229. It shows, as sharply contrasted with the plan of residential wards in Tang dynasty Chang'an (Figure 3-10), how significant this change was. Consequently, commercial and residential activities, and thus shops and houses were no longer segregated from each other, but rather mingled in the web of city streets and alleys. This seems to have been a highly co-ordinated change in two categories of urban spatial organisation, which apparently transformed the city from its highly ritualised nature into one with a fairly high degree of economic and social sophistication. Largely from the results of contemporary urban population studies, and to some extent from ancient descriptions of the splendour and efficiency of Chinese cities, Elvin (1973:177) concludes that China at this time was the most urbanised society in the world. Figures 3-12 and 3-13 are two sections of the scroll-painting *Qingming Shanghe Tu* 清明上河圖, produced in the late Northern

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168 Similar observations are also found in Kato Shigeshi's pioneering study of urbanism in the Song period. (See Mote 1977:125-6)

169 This intensified process of change can be detected from documentary accounts that the Tang authorities from time to time made efforts to restore the conventional urban planning and regulation system. (He 1986:206)

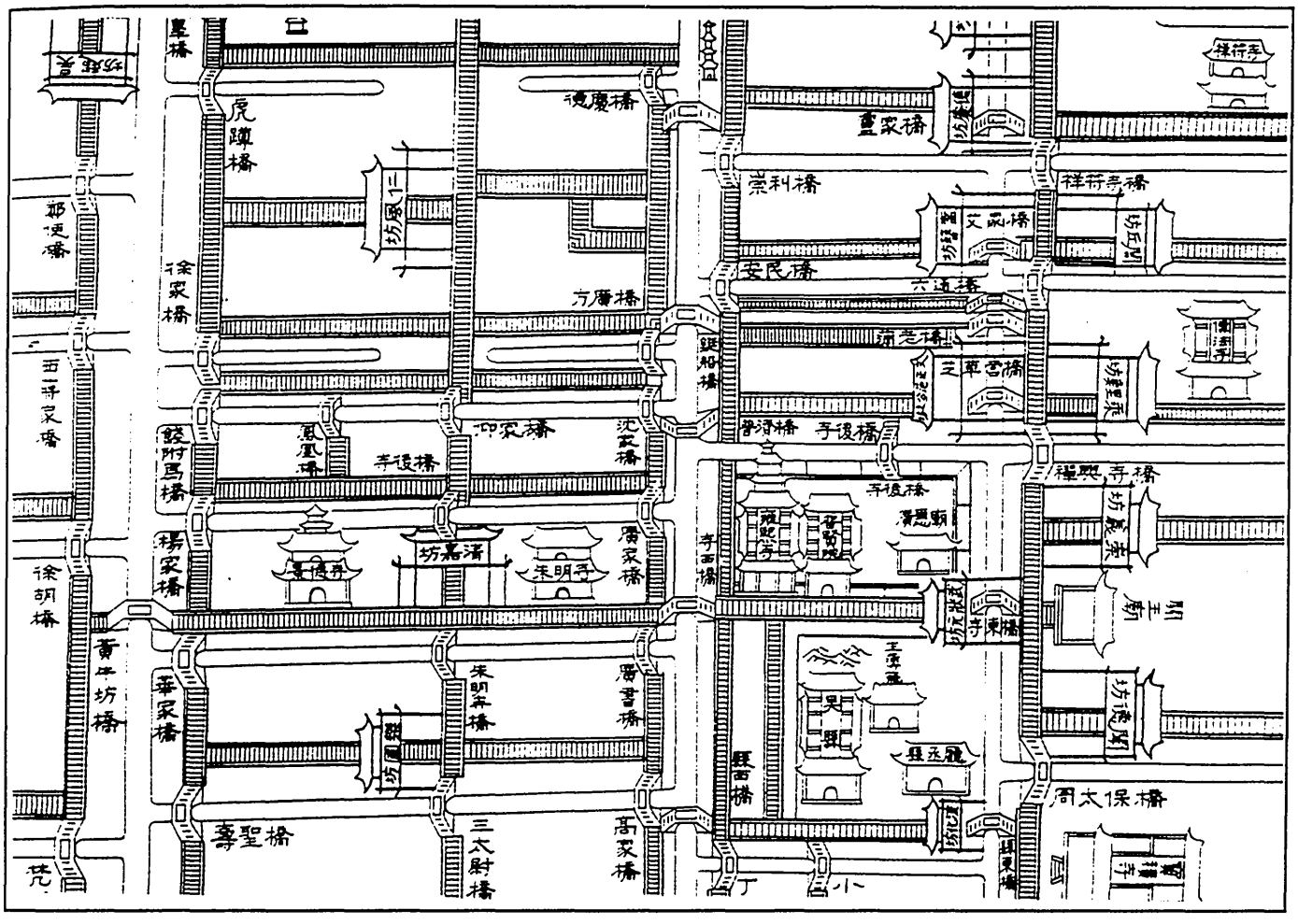

Figure 3-11 A street plan of a section of the city of Suzhou, adapted from a picture map engraved on stone in 1229. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

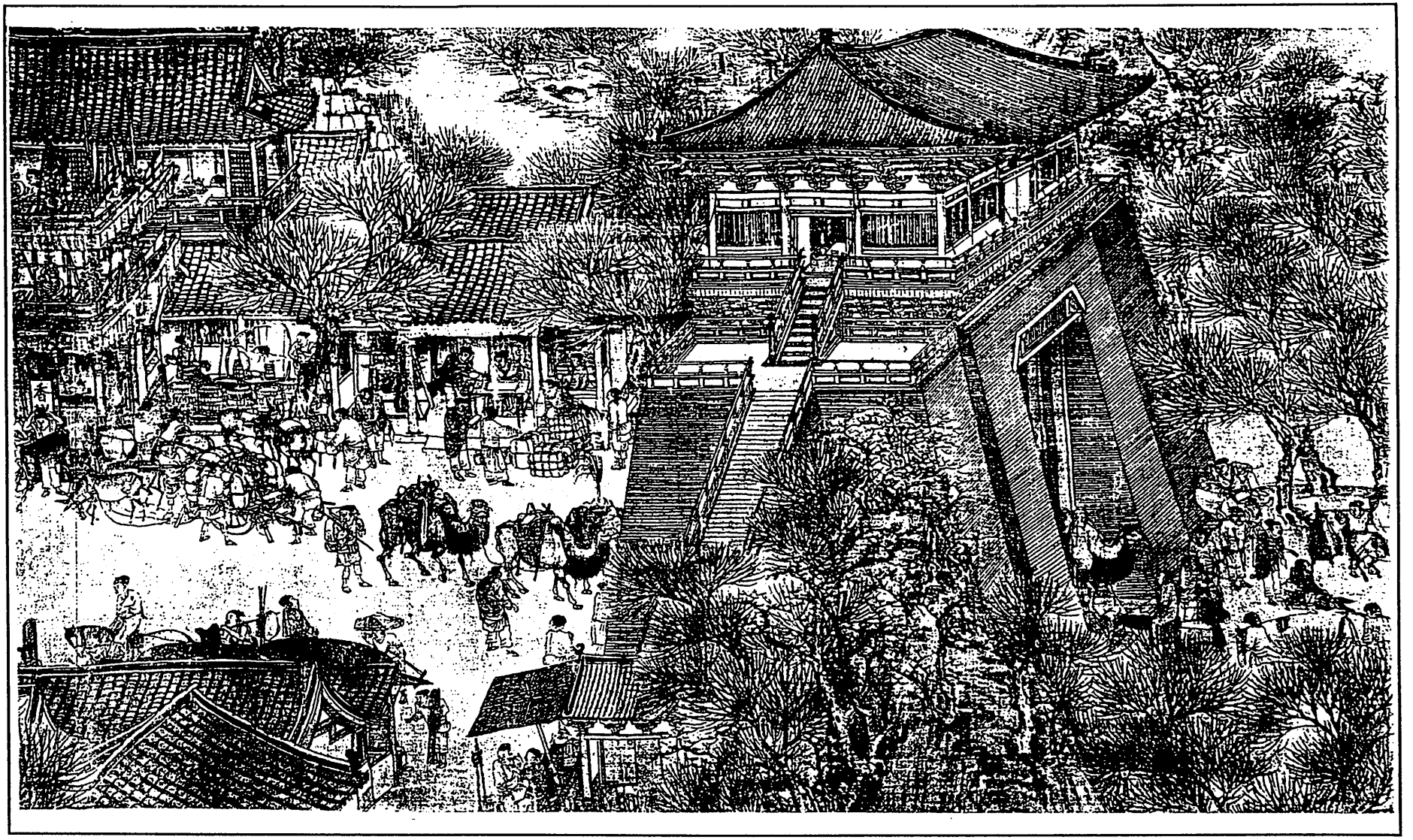

Figure 3-12 A section of the scroll *Qingming Shanghe Tu* depicting street at one of the gates of the city of Northern Song Bianliang.

Figure 3-13 A section of the scroll *Qingming Shanghe Tu* depicting life on a cross-road in the city of Bianliang.

Song probably in the early twelfth century, which vividly depicts the bustling urban streets, shops and houses in and around the Eastern Capital of the Northern Song, Bianliang 汴梁.

The transformation of urban planning systems during the Tang-Song period by no means took place at a uniform speed across the whole continent. In general, some cities in economically advanced areas and somewhat loosely controlled by the central government experienced earlier and more rapid change than others. During the period when the Tang authorities were trying to ban scattered infringements of the old urban market regulations in Chang'an, shopping streets and market activities in evening hours had already developed in some cities in the South-east, such as Suzhou and Yangzhou.[170] Moreover, Skinner (1977a:26) makes it clear that, official policy aside, the medieval urban revolution had not been completed or even taken place in most of China during medieval times. He sees some justification for periodising the history of urban and regional development from the Sui reunification on into two great eras - the Tang-Song and Ming-Qing periods - which were separated by a dark age of devolution and depression, and argues that urban development during the Ming-Qing period was largely an extension and intensification of processes already manifest during medieval times at the cores of the most economically advanced regions, and characteristic of a better integration of capitals at various administrative levels and market towns into a single hierarchical system. (Op.cit. 27-8) Elvin (1977:470-1, Maps 2-6) has illustrated that there were no more than a dozen cities and towns with markets in the vicinity of Shanghai[171] before A.D. 1470, and the number sharply increased from 1600 onward to up to seventy by 1910. Similar patterns of development took place earlier in the core area of Suzhou, as Fan, (1985:399) on the basis of the local gazetteers, estimates that by the early seventeenth century seventy-four cities and towns with markets in the prefecture had already been established. The regional economic centrality of Suzhou was surpassed by the rise of Shanghai only from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, when the modern era of

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170 Some of the poems by contemporary writers reveal the situation in these two cities. In the *Zongyou Huainan* 縱游淮南 by Zhang Hu 張祜 (?-after 849), we read that in Yangzhou "[along] the ten-*li* long street, markets and shops are adjacent to each other," (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 511) while Wang Jian 王建 (*c.* 766-*c.* 830) in his *Yekan Yangzhou Shi* 夜看揚州市 in describing the city says "a thousand lamps from the late evening market illuminated the blue clouds." (Op.cit. vol. 301) As for the city of Suzhou, Du Xunhe 杜荀鶴 (846-*c.* 907) in his *Songren You Wu* 送人游吳 also mentions the late evening market. (Op.cit. vol. 691)

171 The area that later became known as Shanghai was under the jurisdiction of Suzhou prefecture until A.D. 939.

mechanised transport and industry started. (Skinner 1977a:17)

3.2.3 Urban Space in Transformation

The comprehensive and persistent retrenchment of the bureaucratic government's role in all aspects of local affairs, and the gradual replacement of the enclosed marketplace and the walled-ward system by a much freer street plan, led to the practical and conceptual change of public space - notably the street - in the urban area. No term in Han times, to my knowledge, specifically denotes a public road lined with buildings in a city or large settlement of any other kind. In the *Zhou Li*, (See, e.g., "Dongguan Kaogong Ji," vol. 41: "Jiangren") the character *tu* 涂, a general term for road, is employed with certain modifiers to indicate avenues within the royal capital, and with other modifiers to indicate roads in the countryside. The character *jie* 街, later denoting what we know as "street," was defined by Xu Shen 許慎 (*c.* A.D. 58-147) as "a road leading in the four directions," (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 2B) that is, a cross-roads; and later it was interpreted by one of his contemporaries, Ying Shao 應劭, as "departure from the cross-roads." (*Fengsu Tongyi*) In other words, *jie* could be applied to descriptions of cross-roads in both urban and rural settings, and, in this sense, it might not have been differentiated from the general term *qu* 衢 (lit. "[a road] open in the four directions." Cf. *Er Ya*, vol. 5: "Shi Gong," no. 5; *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 2B) which was used before the mid-Tang more often to describe the city road system than was the character *jie*.

The early denotations of these terms clearly reflected the configuration of the urban spatial structure developed in the period up to the mid-Tang. We have seen in Figure 3-10 that public roads in Sui and Tang dynasty Chang'an were lined by uniform walls enclosing residential wards or marketplace. These roads effectively helped to divide the city into standard blocks. Wright (1965:671) has pointed out that the division of this kind was implied by the Chinese ritual canons, and, in terms of socio-spatial organisation, these blocks were meant to control the urban population. Yet practically, the roads were themselves no more than passages for internal traffic. The break-up of these blocks during the period between the mid-Tang and Song led to the transformation of many of these passages into busy streets flanked with shops, restaurants, houses, and the like. Hence I suggest that it was only during the transitional period of urban development beginning from the mid-Tang that *jie* started to carry the full sense of "street," and thus to be used as one of

the general terms indicating specific places in large settlements.[172]

This physical and conceptual transformation proves to have been profound and far-reaching in the history of urban development in imperial China. Not only did it function as part of the process of what Skinner (1977a:28) calls "a progressive departure from cosmologically proper principles of city planning," but also brought a true sense of "public space" into the city: urban space of daily activities in which all residents of and around the city could freely participate. Moreover, streets and alleys became one of the key organising components in the cognition of the city. Indeed, we find in pre-Ming texts about the city of Suzhou, that the location of urban artefacts was invariably recorded by reference to other important structures, such as city gates, important temples, well-known bridges or neighbourhoods (*fang*), whereas in Ming and Qing texts, it was more likely given by reference to specific streets and alleys. Also, newly occurring accounts were descriptions of distinctive physical features of certain particular streets and alleys, and an elaboration of their symbolic meanings; and distinctions of this kind seem to indicate the increasing importance of streets and alleys in both physical reality and the people's conception of the city. This, I believe, should also be regarded as one of the fundamental changes in the cities of imperial China.

Another consequential effect of the medieval urban revolution is the characteristic partitioning of urban space in late imperial time. We have seen that the division of the city into blocks, which effectively produced a functional zoning system, was not only one of the major themes of the canonical prescription of ideal imperial city planning, but also an actual feature common to most of the cities of appreciable size and importance until the mid-Tang. What Skinner (op.cit. 25) regards as "a long-term secular trend beginning in the T'ang" gradually brought an end to this governmentally imposed and ritualised system. Since Mote's (1973:59) study of Suzhou focuses on the period from not earlier than the ninth century onward, it seems reasonable to assume that his remark that "there were no zones of uniform land use in Chinese cities" is meant to speak for the urban phenomenon

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172 The timing of the assumption of the term *jie* to indicate busy roads of a certain width and length within a particular city was not necessarily determined by the timing or the extent of the occurrence of such transformation in the region, but was often closely associated with the specific path of the city's development, since Chinese civilisation lodged its history mainly in the written word rather than in architectural artefacts. In the city of Suzhou, for example, the application of *jie* did not take place until the early Ming period, whereas it had been widely used in Northern Song Kaifeng and Southern Song Hangzhou.

only in the second half of the imperial era.

What replaced the old system of the imposed division of the city were districts which could be distinguished by the domination of certain occupations, but ones which were far from socially and functionally homogeneous. After reviewing three areas of discrepancy - the location of business enterprises, socio-economic differentiation, and population gradients - among descriptive analyses of particular Chinese cities, the generalisations frequently encountered in sinological literature, and the theoretical predictions of urban geographers and sociologists, Skinner (1977e:527-38) presents a fairly comprehensive argument about the nature of social differentiation within late imperial Chinese cities, and in particular its relation to the partitioning of urban space, which he terms "urban ecology." "It was," he argues after illustrating the situation in Qing dynasty Beijing, "characterised by two nuclei, one the centre of merchant activity, the other the centre of gentry and official activity." (Op.cit. 533) He then sums up in overall perspective some distinctive characteristics of space use between these two districts. The business district was dominated by shop-houses which were normally two-storey buildings; quarters were cramped because of high land values, the normal desire of businessmen to keep nonessential overheads low, and the frugality of sojourners out to save as much as possible of their income. The location of the business nucleus appears to have been determined more by the transport costs of the merchants than by convenience of access for consumers, and it was typically displaced from the geographic centre of the walled city toward or even beyond the gate or gates affording direct access to the major interurban transport route. The gentry district, on the other hand, was centred around official institutions, such as the *yamen*, Confucian school-temples and examination halls; it was characterised by a high proportion of residences with spacious compounds and by relatively many complex families. (Ibid.)

The situation in Ming-Qing Suzhou appears to have been more complex than that in Beijing. An encyclopaedia (GTJ, vol. 676) of 1726 records that since the east area of the prefecture of Suzhou, including the territories of Taicang 太倉 and Jiading 嘉定 counties, was characterised by high terrain which was unsuitable for paddy field development, cotton was often the main crop and people in that area largely took spinning and weaving as their profession. Consequently, "[residents in] the east part of the city were all engaged in the textile industry," and crowds of labourers of different skills waited to be hired on a daily basis every morning

variously at Flower Bridge (*huaqiao* 花橋), Guanghua Temple Bridge (*guanghuasi qiao* 廣化寺橋) and Lianxi Memorial Gateway (*lianxi fang* 濂溪坊) in that part of the city. The passage continues regarding other parts of the city:

> Within the city walls, [Wu 吳 county] governed with Changzhou 長洲 [county] the area that was divided into east and west parts.[173] The west part was more boisterous than the east part. . . . The households in the area of Jinchang 金閶[174] were all involved in trade and business, whereas its near suburbs were densely occupied by brokers. Within Xu 胥 [Gate] and Pan 盤 [Gate] were crowded prefectural and county *yamen*. [Therefore in this area] more *yamen* clerks resided, and families of letter were concentrated, especially at places in and near the well-regulated neighbourhoods (*lü* 閭). (Op.cit. 676/508)

In Figure 3-14, I accordingly draw a diagrammatic plan of the partitioning of urban space in Suzhou, which indicates that three major districts are distinguishable, namely that of business in the north-west (including its suburbs) which was in the direction of the city's main commercial trade route - the Grand Canal and the west city moat; that of gentry and officials in the south-west, where governmental and cultural establishments were concentrated; and that of family-based textile industry in the north-east - the concentration of this profession in this direction being largely affected by adjacent rural industrial activities. Certainly a hard and fast line cannot be drawn between these districts, nor were they functionally "purified" quarters. Rather, Suzhou was typical of many other late imperial cities in China in that shops were more dispersed in many parts of the city and the rich and poor residences were more intermingled than in modern Western cities. Here the reader's attention is drawn to the development of the west suburbs, a process that probably started in the Song but became most intensified in the late imperial period. This development epitomised the enormous urban expansion from the mid-Ming onwards. I will return to this phenomenon and its implications later in the next section and in Chapter Five.

Yet the model that Skinner (op.cit. 536) has constructed, approximate as it seems, holds generally for late imperial cities. It differs, as Skinner points out,

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173 The county of Changzhou was further divided in 1724 to establish the county of Yuanhe 元和, the seat of which was also to be in the city .(*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Jianzhi Yange") But the account in this encyclopaedia is a citation from some earlier local documents and thus does not include the periods after this event.

174 This is the area around (both inside and outside) Chang Gate in the north by west walls. The term Jinchang derived from the name of an old pavilion, known as Jinchang Ting 金閶亭, outside Chang Gate.

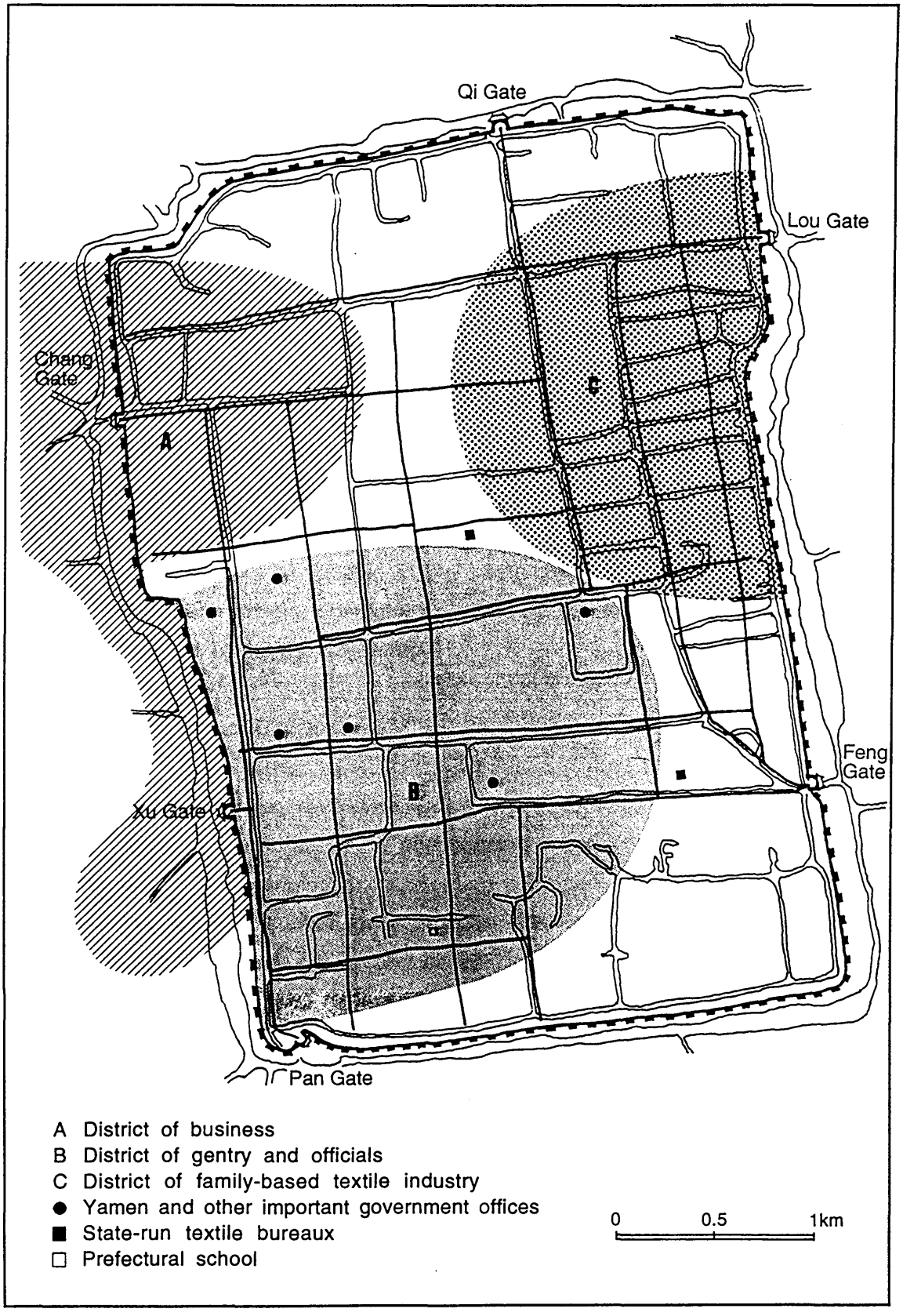

Figure 3-14 Diagrammatic plan of the partitioning of urban space of Suzhou.

from the model set forth by Gideon Sjoberg and some other Western scholars[175] in several aspects: (1) it had two or more nuclei instead of a single nucleus that *ipso facto* defined *the* city centre; (2) at least one of the nuclei skewed geographically - in the case of Suzhou, all three functionally differentiated districts were off-centre; and (3) social status did not decline with distance from the centre, nor were the poorest elements necessarily in the peripheries of most imperial Chinese cities, since certain suburbs lay squarely within the business nucleus. Thus the urban sociological periphery in Chinese cities bears no spatial relation to wider concentric circles, but was to be found at those corners of the intramural area that were least accessible from the more important gates. It is clearly noticeable from the map of the city of Suzhou contained in the prefectural gazetteer of 1883 (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, "Tu;" see Figure 3-15) that the land in the far south-east, north-east and north-west was derelict or devoted to agriculture, even though densely populated suburbs must have expanded outside the two gates in the west walls. Another interesting phenomenon in the late Qing period of Suzhou may also serve to strengthen the point: churches and hospitals founded by American and European Jesuit missionaries were all located in the south-east part of the city, the quarter which was the least socially prestigious and economically sensible and thus most likely to be utilised by foreign elements.

3.2.4 Summary of Conclusions

The medieval urban revolution that occurred between the mid-eighth and twelfth centuries at the cores of the economically most advanced regions brought about changes in the planning and governing principles of the urban market and residential system: large cities grew rapidly, often spilling out from their walls into suburbs; internally, the old system of tightly controlled and segregated walled-quarters broke down and was replaced by plans of city streets of free disposition of commerce, trade, industry and residence. This process of transformation was further extended and intensified during the Ming and Qing periods, when walled cities and market towns were better integrated into a single hierarchical system, and when the development of extramural commercial suburbs of large cities incorporated outlying market towns into enlarged conurbations. Both the physical pattern of urban spatial arrangement and people's conception of the urban world

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175 Sjoberg 1960. The concept represented by Sjoberg's model seems to have been generally, if not totally, accepted by Kostof 1991:27. The feature of cities' having two (or, as in the case of Suzhou, three) nuclei is not peculiar to Chinese experience. See Hohenberg and Lees 1985:33.

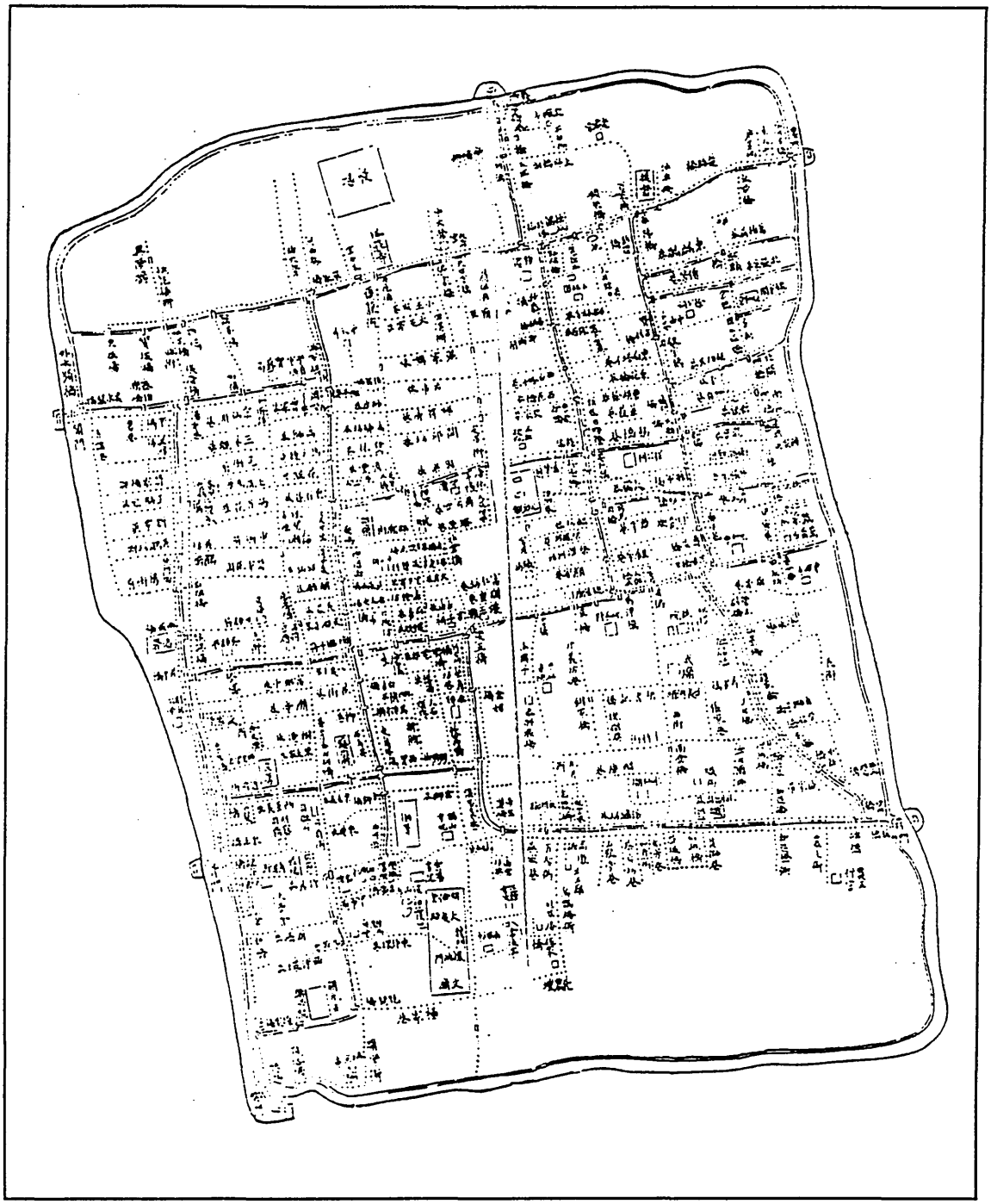

Figure 3-15 A map of the city of Suzhou contained in the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi* ("Sucheng Quantu").

were profoundly transformed. Whereas an essential feature of the cities - their function of imperial administration - remained decidedly unchanged,[176] most of them in the late imperial period must have been vastly different from those before the mid-Tang in many important respects, such as their economic function, social organisation, arrangement of internal space, articulation with the rural areas, and so forth. Changes in these areas were essential as well, I believe, if a city was to be seen as a vital, multiplex phenomenon.

On the other hand, Murphy's (1984:188) statement that the traditional Chinese city lasted "essentially unchanged" holds not only in terms of the city's administratrive function, but also in yet another respect; that is, the stability in time of the overall form of many (but not all) cities, defined by their walls, seems remarkable in world-wide perspective. The city of Suzhou provided a perfect example of this characteristic of China's urban history. As we will see later in section 3.3.4 and Chapters Four and Five, the position of this city's walls and thus its outline shape basically remained unchanged from at least the 1220s onwards, whereas its urban expansion was tremendous from that same period. Here an interesting question arises: how should the co-existence of these two seemingly contradictory features be explained? This antithesis has also been noted by Rowe (1993:2) who speaks of the tension between the realisation of the growth of certain cities in the Lower Yangzi and the undeniable long-term stability of city forms. Rowe does not tackle this issue but wisely cautions against the acceptance of easy or one-sided conclusions on it. In the following section, I try to develop a preliminary answer to this question, which will be more fully discussed in Chapter Five.

3.3 CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE

3.3.1 Urban-rural Relationships

A fundamental distinction between cities in China and towns in Western Europe was emphasised forty years ago by Balazs (1964:66) who paid attention to

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176 A recognition of the persistence of the administrative functions of cities by no means implies that the government role in marketing, commerce and social regulations lasted unchanged. There was in fact a trend of gradual, and yet marked retreat of government control over these affairs, beginning in the mid-Tang and lasting to the late imperial period, although it was punctuated by the periodic re-imposition of controls. (Cf. Skinner 1977a:24-5; Rawski 1985a:5-6)

their different social and political contents:

> To speak of towns is to speak of the bourgeoisie - such was the underlying assumption of those studies of urban development undertaken from the nineteenth century onward, in which a clear distinction was made between town and country because of differences in mode of life, social structure, and means of subsistence. It was the presence of a specifically urban class, which may loosely be termed the bourgeoisie, that was taken as the defining characteristic of the town, whether the town in question was the *polis* of classical antiquity, the medieval city with its artisans and merchants, or the modern industrial town. The interest in problems concerning the nature, origin, and development of towns was in itself largely due to historical developments resulting from the rise of the bourgeoisie.
>
> But in China there were towns that had no urban class comparable to the Western bourgeoisie. . . .

Yet, as Balazs (op.cit. 68) has noted, a marked distinction between Chinese cities and their European counterparts did not conspicuously arise in the pre-Qin period, or the "feudal period," as he calls it, when the cities in China contained "the same basic ideas as come to mind when we think of the rise of the town under Western feudalism, or rather, when we recall the main arguments used in the elaboration of theories on the origin of towns (walls, fortifications, markets)."

A far-reaching transformation of the conception of the city in relation to the countryside took place, in China, during the period of the Qin unification. In early Zhou times, the character *guo* 國 which in modern Chinese means "state," "nation" or "country," not only denoted an enfeoffed territory, but also meant the walled city where the seat of the head of the fief resided. In political terms, a city of this kind was constructed, or more precisely, *walled*, to defend the authority of a prince or duke over his fiefdom.[177] The opposite of *guo* is *ye* 野 which literally meant the fields beyond the city's suburbs. The residents in the walled city were called *guoren*

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177 Zhang Guangzhi (1983:110) explicitly points out that in Chinese antiquity, "city construction was not merely an activity of architecture, but also an activity of politics." Such an activity, that of defence, is clearly conveyed by the way in which the pictographic elements compose the character *guo* 國: *yu* 或 was an archaic pictograph denoting the enfeoffed territory, which consisted of the elements *ge* 戈 (dagger-axe), *wei* □ ([archaic] circle or to encircle) and a dash ([archaic] earth or land), and thus, according to Xu Shen 許慎, also indicated the defence of the [enfeoffed] land with weapons. Duan Yucai holds that since the character *yu*, also having a broad sense of protecting one's belongings, became insufficient to convey the exclusive meaning of the enfeoffed territory, as the feudal system was more intensively implemented, another *wei* was added to encircle the character *yu* so as to make the denotation more specific. (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chaps. 6B, 12B)

國人 (lit. "people in the walled city"), as contrasted with the peasantry living and cultivating in the open fields, known as the *yeren* 野人 (lit. "people in the fields beyond the suburbs"), which also connoted "plebeian" or uncivilised men. (CY, I, 1979:573, IV, 1983:3151) Thus it may not be too wrong to regard the *guo*, the walled city, as an island of civilisation surrounded and sometimes threatened by a sea of less-civilised and probably hostile peasantry.[178]

However, as part of the great social change during the period between the break-up of the classical Zhou civilisation and the beginning of the imperial era, the conditions allowing a sense of that kind of urban superiority seem to have vanished.[179] (Mote 1977:102-30) Cities became principally an instrument of the imperial government; that is, they were above all political nuclei, nodes in the administrative network, and, in Needham's (1971:72) terms, "they existed for the sake of the country and not vice versa." They did not show the traits of cities in dual societies, (Eberhard 1962:267) at least until the Ming and Qing periods when a sense of urban identification may have emerged among certain groups of residents in the city. Mote (op.cit. 103-4) maintains that after the Qin unification, Chinese values did not sustain a self-identifying and self-perpetuating urban elite as a component of the population, and that a probably unique urban rural continuum existed, both as physical and organisational realities, and as an aspect of Chinese

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178 Trewartha (1952:69-70) suggests that the Bronze Age civilisation in China, associated with the Shang period, did not immediately replace the earlier Neolithic culture in North China, "for there was a long period during which the former was restricted to a small warlike, aristocratic, ruling class occupying a number of small, scattered, autonomous city states which existed like islands in a sea of Neolithic barbarism;" and that "the urban culture which had its beginning under the Shang dynasty was brought to full pattern during the feudal period that followed (Chou [i.e. Zhou] Dynasty), especially between the eleventh and sixth centuries B.C. There continued to be a China of the cities and a China of the rural villages with a sharp distinction existing between the urban aristocrats and the peasant serfs."

179 On the revolutionary transformation of Chinese social and political system around the period of the Qin unification, Mote (1971:112-3) writes:

> Ch'in [i.e. Qin] institutional innovations were very important to Chinese history; some of the basic forms created then had only to be reconstituted from time to time by later regimes establishing new dynasties. The Ch'in government was the first organically centralised administration that China had known . . . This political innovation, however, accompanied and reflected fundamental social changes then underway throughout the Chinese world. China was at the point of transition from a system of closed classes and a bound tenant peasantry to one of independent landowning peasants in a society no longer having a legally privileged elite of hereditary status. The state of Ch'in, and finally the dynasty of Ch'in, became the instrument for hastening this process of social development and formally establishing it first within its own area and then throughout the Chinese cultural realm.

psychology;[180] and that China achieved in theory and in actual practice what he calls an "open society." He categorically states: "The rural component of Chinese civilisation was more or less uniform, and it extended everywhere that Chinese civilisation penetrated. It, and not the cities, defined the Chinese way of life."[181] (Op.cit. 105)

Mote's arguments touch upon the central feature that sets the Chinese experience apart from that of the Western world. However, they seem to constitute a sweeping generalisation of a complicated reality and thus may be questioned. There is indeed a suspicion in them of talking about the history of Chinese society as though there were few changes in the entire course of the imperial era. Although the Chinese attained very early, in law and in fact, the rights to own, buy and sell land freely, (see, e.g., Fairbank 1992:55, 102) it seems, as Eberhard (1962:30) has suggested, that until around A.D. 1000 social mobility was quite restricted in China. The civil war of the tenth century and the economic developments of the eleventh century were periods of greater mobility. We have already seen that fundamental transformation was brought to the cities by the medieval urban revolution that took place from the second half of the eighth century onwards. This transformation was accompanied by a marked growth in the numbers, wealth and power of merchants; and by what Balazs (1964:72) calls "the beginning of something quite new: the rise of a new social class in the interstices of the traditional social structure," namely a large group of "upstarts" practising low-class professions - actors, singers, prostitutes, fortune-tellers, professional storytellers, jugglers, and the like. Also concomitant to it was an improvement of spatial (and social) mobility: the collapse of the old residential and market ward system, and the spill-out of commerce from within the city walls to the suburbs, indicate that both urban and rural people were

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180 Mote (1973:54) states, "Patterns of social interaction between rural and urban social elements were those of profound mutual involvement. There may have been a trend toward concentration of the elite in cities as places of domicile in the later imperial era, but it was at best a trend; throughout the traditional period in Chinese social history, the elite was widely diffused in space, and psychologically oriented toward as many rural ties as urban ones." Indeed, from all Chinese documents, we find that individuals, notably the intellectuals, usually identified themselves or were identified by others as coming from certain regions, prefectures or counties, regardless of whether their home places were urban or rural.

181 He offers an interesting metaphor to illustrate the point:

> It [the rural component of Chinese civilisation] was like the net in which the cities and towns of China were suspended. The fabric of this net was the stuff of Chinese civilisation, sustaining it and giving it its fundamental character. . . . China's cities were but knots of the same material, of one piece with the net, denser in quality but not foreign bodies resting on it. (1977:105)

able to change their place of residence and way of life.[182] It seems safer therefore to say that China, in the historical process of the break-up of the classic Zhou civilisation, achieved, in theory at the most, an "open society," whereas it started to become an actual, widespread social practice only from the late Tang onward.[183]

What about the late imperial period? Despite profound differences of opinion on the contours of the historical landscape, historians of China seem agreed that Chinese society underwent significant changes in the course of the Ming dynasty, "changes," as Rawski (1985:3) asserts, "that produced the political, social, and economic institutions of late imperial China." This is largely in accord with Myers' (1974:274) view that "one can argue convincingly that Ming and Ch'ing [i.e. Qing] China experienced changes as profound and far-reaching as those of the Sung [i.e. Song]."[184] One of the characteristic aspects of the period from the mid-Ming on was the multiplication of the market towns, at least in the economically more advanced

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182 It seems worth emphasising with Mote (1977:103) the generally favourable Chinese attitude towards peasantry, which must also have affected the development of Chinese cities. "Chinese civilisation," he writes, "may be unique in that its word for 'peasant' has not been a term of contempt - even though the Chinese idea of a 'rustic' may be that of a humorously unsophisticated person." The humorous side of this attitude has been vividly illustrated by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (?-1763) in the description of Granny Liu (Liu Laolao 劉姥姥) in his *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢. Mote (1977:106) has, in acknowledging sophistication and skills in dealing with complex situations represented by the city, also noticed the circumstance under which even a learned gentleman who knew both city and country life well (but probably preferred the latter) might declare himself a mere "country fellow," a "rustic simpleton," as a gesture of conventional humility before the rich and the prominent, or even before his intellectual peers and old neighbours who happened to be in office. In fact, the Chinese word for "peasantry" has often been a term of admiration in a moral sense. Among the traditionally received "four classes of people" (*simin* 四民) - *shi* 仕 (lit. "gentry" or "literati"), *nong* 農 (lit. "peasantry"), *gong* 工 (lit. "craftsmen") and *shang* 商 (lit. "merchants"), peasantry stood in second place behind gentry who were educated people in government service or candidates for service, and whose families were at the same time usually landlords, thus also closely related to both land and civilisation. (Cf. Feng 1985:23-4; Eberhard 1962:5-6)

183 Mote has drawn upon research by P. T. Ho (1962) on social mobility by the second half of the imperial era. It has also been suggested by Elvin (1973:255) that the disappearance of the "manorial order," as he calls it, led to greatly increased social mobility and to greater geographical mobility during the Ming and Qing periods. Eberhard (1962:264) lays more stress on families as social units with regard to social mobility. He argues that not every individual had the same chance of moving up into the top level of society, and concludes that the process of social mobility has to be conceived of as "a movement of families rather than a movement of individuals," if a long-term social rise is to be seen to have occurred. Yet Mote (1977:103) has adroitly emphasised, "Whether large numbers actually participated in either kind of mobility is less important than the psychological fact that such mobility was possible."

184 Wakeman, Jr. (1975a:2) emphasises that "the entire period from the 1550s to the 1930s constituted a coherent whole," and that continued processes of development "stretched across the last four centuries of Chinese history into the republican period."

parts of China such as the Suzhou region, at a rate exceeding that of the population increase.[185] (Elvin 1973:268) Administrative centres grew with official encouragement, while commercial towns flourished on their own. Although during the late imperial period the trend towards the growth of great cities seems to have stopped or reversed itself, there was a lessening of the contrast between these great cities and the countryside as the relative importance of small to middle sized urban centres increased; (op.cit. 178) and it is reasonable to believe, as do Naquin and Rawski (1987:55), that now "all Chinese culture was influenced by what was happening in China's towns and cities."[186]

Such a sociological situation - a new phenomenon in Chinese urban history - should not however be seen as a model distinguishing sharply between urban and rural societies, as it did in Western urban history. This is because by this time, China, and its economically more advanced regions in particular, became something that was truly worthy of the term an "open society": the urban and the rural by now formed a kind of organic unity, a unity being evidenced by daily patterns of living in the Suzhou region - daily movements of large number of people into and out of

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185 Elvin (1973:277) suggests that "one can argue the paradoxical proposition that the Chinese countryside was both overindustrialised and overcommercialised [sic]." Huang Xingzeng 黃省曾 (1490-1540), a scholar of Wu county, records what he observed in the Suzhou region in a passage also cited by Elvin (ibid.):

> The large villages and famous towns invariably developed shops that sold every kind of commodity, so as to monopolise the profits; and those who carried [goods] on their backs between the towns and villages were all in distress. Thus money accumulated [amounts to] millions. To this day, most members of the gentry in the Suzhou area take trade and business as their priority. (*Wufeng Lu*)

186 Rawski (1985a:8) has argued that, in the Lower Yangzi core, absentee landlordism was a prominent development during the late Ming and Qing periods:

> Reliance on contractual rather than personal frameworks of control enabled richer landowners to respond to the economic and cultural opportunities offered by an urban milieu, and they began to move out of villages into towns and cities. Urban residence altered patterns of elite investment and consumption. Landlords residing in towns began to invest their surplus funds in pawnshops, commerce, and urban real estate, ventures that promised higher profits than land investments but that also entailed higher risk. Urban-based landlords and scholar families confronted a more insecure financial future than did their rural relatives, not only because of their greater involvement in the marketplace, but because their expenditures tended to soar once they had moved to town. Towns offered improved access to books and an intellectually dynamic urban culture, but they frequently also offered irresistible diversions from the narrow path of examination studies in the form of wine, women, and song.

Elsewhere, (op.cit. 9, 28) she states more explicitly that the trend to urban residence among large landlords and other elites from villages stimulated urban culture.

cities. Greater integration of capital cities and market towns into a single hierarchical system, an even distribution of urban population throughout the hierarchy, (Skinner 1977a:28) the inter-dependence of cities, towns and villages upon each other, and the inland communications which were at least as good as and often much better than those of any other part of the world before the railway age (Ward 1985:173-4) - all these "facilitated," to borrow Rawski's (1985a:9) words, "the flow of ideas as well as goods between city and countryside." Yet this is not the only reason for the distinctiveness of the late imperial Chinese urban-rural relationship. In fact, cities in China had never embodied the ides of emancipation and of liberty, as cities in Europe did;[187] nor were there secure privileges and autonomy in the administration of them.[188] Naquin and Rawski's (1987:55) careful wording, "what was happening in China's towns and cities," emphasises localities; it does not equate with any suggestion that urban culture "originated from the social milieu of the independent city residents" who were legally set apart from the country peasants. It was a culture different in many aspects from the rural culture, but not alien to it. In this sense, traditional urban culture in China could be seen as created by the intensive interaction between cities, towns and villages from the mid-Ming onwards.[189] It was undoubtedly an "urban culture;" but the use of this term should not confuse the Chinese urban phenomena with those of the West.

The manner of merchant and immigrant influence on the development of China's cities was also sharply distinct from its European counterparts. Although

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187 By the period of late Ming and Qing, cities, unlike what Balazs (1964:70, 78) claims, undoubtedly became a sort of "magnet" for the countryside, "the centre of attraction," although they did not pull the rural people towards its political and economic freedom.

188 Rowe (1993:13) asserts that by the late imperial period "an autonomous urban culture" had evolved. One of the examples on which he draws in support of this view is what he calls "the 1720 Suzhou public security reform," an incident discussed by Santangelo. (1993:112, 113) Yet according to the main source of this incident, a regulatory document carved on a stone stele in 1720, (SLB, et at. 68-71) the "private" policing structure was set up in Suzhou by the managers or contractors of the textile industry (*baotou* 包頭), under the recognition of the local government, to restrict the immigrant calenderers (*chuaijiang* 踹匠) from leaving their workshops (*chuaifang* 踹坊) at night, and from committing themselves to other undesirable activities. It was indeed an "urban" problem. But this policing structure only aimed at tackling the problems of the calenderers, and its patrol area was mostly confined to the workshops rather than the city at large. Thus it would be over-stretching the evidence to call it "a style of urban societal self-policing."

189 This includes, for instance, the trend of assimilation of merchants into the urban elite, which affected its cultural tone, and the great subcultural variety and heightened cultural awareness among city residents that were brought about by organisation on the basis of the subcultural origin of the immigrants from other parts of China, and by intergroup competition and confrontation. (Skinner 1977c:269)

Balazs' judgements of Confucianism (regarded by him as an ideology) may at times seem harsh, his following observation by and large faithfully corresponds to reality:

> The scholar-official's state was so strong that the merchant class never dared to fight it openly in order to extract from it liberties, laws, and autonomy for themselves. Chinese businessmen almost always preferred to reach a compromise rather than fight, to imitate rather than branch out on their own, to invest money safely in land and carry on the permitted form of usury rather than risk putting their money into industrial enterprises. Their abiding ideal was to become assimilated, to be part of the state by becoming - or seeing their children or grandchildren become - scholar-officials themselves. (1964:23)

By the late imperial period, as Skinner (1977c:268-9) has indicated, "the continual incorporation of assimilat*ing* [sic] (and hence only partially assimilate*d* [sic]) merchants into the urban elite . . . inevitably affected its cultural tone." Yet the Chinese city, far from being the bulwark of freedom, was always the centre of state administration at a certain level, and never developed to a "state within a state," as did many free towns of medieval Europe,[190] where the serf was able to take refuge under the protection of the autonomous bourgeoisie. (Balazs 1964:23)

Immigrants from various parts of the country brought diverse local subcultural ingredients to the urban environment, which in turn gradually shaped the intensified cultural life of the city. But it is important not to ignore the fact that Chinese culture in the last centuries of imperial rule was not only extremely diverse but also highly integrated.[191] The remarkably high level of cultural

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190 Mumford (1961:236) writes on this over thirty years ago:

> By fighting, by bargaining, by outright purchase, or by some combination of these means the towns won the right to hold a regular market, the right to be subject to a special market law, the right to coin money and establish weights and measures, the right of citizens to be tried in their local court, under their local laws and ordinances, and not least, as before noted, the right to bear arms. These powers, which had once been pre-empted by the citadel, now belonged to the city, and each citizen bore a responsibility for exercising them.

None of these rights were gained by Chinese cities.

191 This was the direct consequence of two facts enunciated by Johnson, et al. (1985, "preface":xi)

> At the beginning of our period [*c.* 1550], the population of China had already passed the 100 million mark, and by the last quarter of the eighteenth century it was approaching 300 million. At that time France, the largest nation in Europe, would have ranked third among the provinces of China, and England would have been one of the smallest, surpassing only remote Yunnan [雲南], Kweichow [i.e. Guizhou 貴州],

integration of late imperial China in comparison with many other peasant societies was another crucial factor in the shaping of its cities. By referring to the situation in nineteenth-century France, discussed by Eugen Weber,[192] Watson (1985:292) emphasises that, "unlike the French, Chinese leaders did *not* [sic] have to forge a new national culture based on urban models that were alien to the mass of rural people," for "most villagers already identified themselves with an overarching 'Chinese culture,' an abstraction they had no difficulty understanding," and "the general peasantry did not need urban leaders to remind them that they shared a grand cultural tradition." The role played by the regional elites in society was also sharply in contrast to that of the French:

> In China, by contrast, local elites shared a common cultural tradition (fostered by a standardised educational curriculum) and were anxious to participate in the affairs of state. They could, in the process, retain their regional identities as long as they were loyal to the idea of a unified whole. Chinese national-level authorities were themselves likely to have strong ties to kinsmen in the countryside and, hence, allegiance to the centre did not necessarily preclude loyalty to one's region. In this sense China may have been unique. (Op.cit. 293)

Thus it is hard to regard what developed in the cities of late imperial China as cultures that were as distinct from those of rural societies as their Western counterparts. There certainly developed attitudes and characteristics of consciousness associated with the city, as acknowledged by Mote (1977:106) who ardently depreciates the idea of a general urban-rural dichotomy in Chinese culture. This was particularly so on the popular level.[193] Again, Mote (op.cit. 117) writes:

> Among the lower ranks of society there probably were much more clearly identifiable urbanites and ruralists, and no doubt the

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> and Kuangsi [i.e. Guangxi 廣西]. Demographically, China was not a France or an England - it was a Europe. But while Europe was divided into multitude of nations growing ever more distinct from each other linguistically, economically, socially, and culturally, China was a single polity, and had been since the late sixth century with interruptions during the Five Dynasties and Southern Song periods).

Although the nature of the integration of diverse elements into a single complex cultural system is very hard to account for, it has to be taken as axiomatic, as Johnson, et al. (op.cit. xiii) suggests, since if not, "the whole idea of Chinese culture dissolves - 'China' is reduced to the semantic triviality of 'Asia.'"

192 *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

193 The self-identification of some groups of urban residents were indeed evidenced in many popular novels, such as *Jinping Mei* 金瓶梅 and *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢.

> distinction between city and country must have had greater meaning in their daily lives.

Johnson (1985a:57) seems more affirmative on this when he states that "rural oral culture probably differed substantially from urban oral culture, while literati culture was probably much the same in country or city."[194]

It would certainly be wrong to assume an urban-rural uniformity and to deny that some of the basic functions of China's cities were absent in villages. But, as Skinner (1977c:269) points out, without implying a negligible cultural role for cities of imperial China, Mote's essential point holds; that is, "the basic cultural cleavages in China were those of class and occupation (complexly interrelated) and of region (an elaborated nested hierarchy), not those between cities and their hinterlands." Few would have doubt as to Murphy's (1984:192) statement being true: in traditional China, "only the continual interchange with the countryside kept the city viable."[195] Since the whole of public life - institutions, construction works, water-control projects, regulations, education, and the like - were (at least largely) subjected to government control, and since the cities were invariably the centres of imperial administration, a distinctive phenomenon of urban-rural continuum was manifested in many aspects of Chinese social life. Mote has presented abundant illustrations to corroborate his argument. A large number of them are cogent, while some others are questionable or need further clarification. There are also a few points that Mote has overlooked, as Skinner (1977c:268) has appreciated, "in his eagerness to dissociate the Chinese case from the hasty generalisations of synthesisers." Since, disputable as they are, the main issues tackled in Mote's works (1973, 1977, etc.) are crucial for, and edifying to, my research on Suzhou in imperial history, I shall, critically, pick up in the following three sub-sections the main points he has made, which will serve as the starting

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194 Among the literati, diverse views on city life undoubtedly existed. After a brief summary of apparently contradictory opinions among some Western scholars on whether elite culture exhibited a rural or an urban bias, Skinner (1977c:268) states:

> There was an urban jungle and a rural jungle in the mind of the literati, as well as a rural idyll and an urban utopia; and this very dualism helps us understand why the elite were disproportionately urban despite the dangers of urban life and why a majority of them lived in the countryside despite the attractions of the city. One might expect urban gentry (and officials-in-office) to have emphasised the one theme and rural gentry (and officials-out-of-office) to have emphasised the other.

195 Elsewhere, Murphy (op.cit. 190) also states: "The close interdependence of city and countryside was far more explicitly recognised, and indeed welcomed, in China than elsewhere."

point for the present discussion.

3.3.2 Urban and Rural Elements

The Chinese city, as I have argued in the previous section, was an administrative centre of an area and not an entity of its own; it possessed no government distinct from that of the surrounding countryside, and thus no corporate identity which set it apart from the rural areas. In this respect, I share Mote's (1973:54; 1977:114) argument that the Chinese city had no "civic monuments," no need of a city hall as "a place of assembly where citizens could exercise their political rights," (Hilberseimer 1955:90) since it had no "citizens" in the strict sense of the word - its residents had no legal or social status distinguishing them from rural residents, and they were not constituents of different administrative units. As Elvin (1978:87) plainly puts: "there was little civic awareness as such." Mote (1977:116) also states,

> The Chinese city did not totally lack public squares and public gardens, but it had less need of them because its citizens had, and probably preferred, their small, private, but open and sunny courtyards.

Whereas I concur in general with Mote's argument quoted above, the statement that "the Chinese city did not totally lack public squares"[196] proves to be the case as I see it probably only in the literal sense that a fairly spacious open piece of ground may be found occasionally in a very small number of cities. It may have accidentally come into being with the passage of time, and sometimes functioned partially as what we understand as a public square - principally as a civic centre and a marketplace (Kostof 1992:153) - in many historical European cities.

Yet it did not function in the way that Paul Zucker sees "as a basic factor in town planning, as the very heart of the city;" (1959:1) nor did it represent an essential element of a typical city or settlement of any other kind in imperial China, but was basically as much contradictory to the political nature of Chinese cities, especially before the late Ming period when an urban identity may have been gained among certain groups of city dwellers, as to the psychological attitudes of the

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196 This statement is presumably an example of Mote's cautious writing, since in his earlier work on Suzhou, he has explicitly indicated that "China's cities have no town halls, hence no town squares." (1973:58) The following argument is only prompted by the wording in the quotation, rather than by his opinion.

Chinese towards socio-spatial organisation. Although more discussions on the pragmatic and psychological aspects of the use of public open space will be discussed later in Chapter Six, it needs to be emphasised here that the very few cases of a piece of open ground in the urban area do *not* necessarily indicate that Chinese cities had to a lesser degree a similar need of public squares to that of their European counterparts, which, as one of the civic urban facilities, characterised cities as distinct from other, rural settlements. It should also be noted that public gardens accessible to both urban and rural residents, especially on festivals and holidays, were located in the rural areas around the city as much as within the city walls, and in them natural landscapes were transformed into specific resorts by hydraulic conservancy projects and other scattered constructions.

Another indicator of the absence of Western style urban-rural dichotomy is noted by Mote; (1977:114-5) that is, there were no physical symbols of the religious element of Chinese life comparable to those in the West. Official religion[197] had its important temples in cities, such as the Confucian temples (*kongmiao* 孔廟) and the temples of city walls and moats (*chenghuang* 城隍), most of which were patronised by the government and its officials. Yet they did not presuppose professional clergy; nor did they physically or symbolically dominate the cities. Mote (1977:115) even claims that the Confucian temples were in fact state offices, important chiefly for their secular functions. Chinese public religion was also sharply different from Western religion in terms of its organisation, its financing, and its link with the city as the place where its monuments might attest to its role in society. Buddhist and Daoist temples were licensed by the state which was often unsympathetic towards them and at times repressive; they could be closed or required to move by secular authority. Although city temples were often wealthy, ornate, and in the case of large Buddhist temples, usually having pagodas that were the tallest buildings in the low and sprawling skyline of the Chinese city, they did not dominate the city spiritually or architecturally. A greater number of temples were actually located in rural settings, which were often larger, richer and more

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197 On the nature of the imperial cult, Mote (1977:114) emphasises that it was the private business of the emperor. Its important physical monuments included the Imperial Ancestral Temple (*taimiao* 太廟), the Altar of Land and Grain (*sheji* 社稷) and the Altars of Heaven and Earth (*tiantan* 天壇 and *ditan* 地壇). They were located only in and around the imperial capital. Since the present study is about the regional and local cities, I shall bypass this part of discussion. His claim that "China had no sacred cities or holy public shrines" (Ibid.) may not be taken as a denial of the sacred and cosmic role of imperial capitals, but as a stress on the dissociation of the Chinese case from that of Europe, ancient Egypt, and the Classical and Islamic worlds.

ornate than those in the city. This feature was clearly evidenced in the area of Suzhou: out of 361 Buddhist temples (including those which had become derelict) in Suzhou prefecture, as recorded in the 1883 prefectural gazetteer, only 87 were located within the walls of the prefectural and county capitals; whereas the proportion of the number of Taoist temples within the walls of these cities to the total number was higher, more were still in the rural areas (46 out of 79). (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vols. 39-44: "Siguan," nos. 1-6) Many other miscellaneous deities in diffused popular religion were worshipped as well, but their temples, much smaller and humbler compared with many Buddhist and Taoist temples, were located both within and outside the city walls. Mote (1977:115) thus concludes,

> The cities of China were not keystones in an important religious institutional structure - a state within the state as in Europe, or an arm of the state as in ancient Egypt and the Classical and Islamic worlds.

After suggesting that neither styles of dress, patterns of eating and drinking, means of transportation, nor any other obvious aspects of daily life, display characteristic dichotomies between the urban and rural communities,[198] Mote (1973:58; 1977:117-8) continues to argue that Chinese cultural and economic activities involved both the cities and the countryside, and they were indistinguishable as "urban" and "rural": probably more of the schools (especially private schools known as the *shuyuan* 書院), publishing activities, private libraries and art collections, were located in villages or out-of-the-way rural settings;[199] there were no festivals which could be classified as strictly urban or rural;[200] commercial concentrations, flourishing markets, and industrial

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198 The contrast between the luxury of life provided for the wealthy in the city of Suzhou and the meagre conditions in the remote countryside was revealed in an interesting incident which was morally deplored by Shen Shouzhi, a nineteenth-century local scholar. When the news reached Suzhou of the fall of Jiujiang 九江, a city located over five hundred miles away in the south-west, all the gentry families immediately fled to the countryside; but later at the time when the nearby cities of Jinling 金陵, Yangzhou 楊州 and Zhenjiang 鎮江 were taken by the rebels, these families unexpectedly returned to the city simply because the country life was unbearable for them. (*Jiechao Biji*, "Sucheng Shixian Lunlue")

199 A total of ninety-five schools (including both the public and private, and both the existing and derelict), for example, is recorded in the area of Suzhou prefecture in 1883, while only thirty-nine of them were located within the walls of the prefectural and county capitals. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vols. 25-7: "Xuexiao," nos. 1-3) Although it is evidenced in the above gazetteer that prominent schools were more likely located within these cities of the prefecture, the fact that more of the most nationally renowned *shuyuan* in history were in the countryside seems to indicate that the situation may have been different in nation-wide perspective.

200 Festivals were indeed usually classified as part of the nation-wide, regional or local

production and distribution were often outside city walls, though adjacent to major cities, while skilled labour sources were drawn from both within the cities and outside them for hire on very short terms or by the day.[201] Although some of the above assertions may be questionable and exceptions are expected to be found elsewhere, the principal argument is largely tenable that, in terms of cultural, industrial and commercial activities, a hard and fast line can hardly be drawn between the cities and the countryside.

From an architectural point of view, Mote (1977:115-6) observes that in the essentials of design, in materials used, and in form and ornamentation, Chinese urban structures were indistinguishable from rural structures, and thus the continuum from the city to suburbs to open countryside was embodied in the uniformity of building styles and layout, and in the use of ground space.[202] Skinner (1977c:269) apparently disagrees with this observation by pointing out that Chinese cities did have their distinctive edifices, such as the drum tower and bell tower, the great examination hall, and the elaborate towers at the corners and gates of the city wall. If we are to look into this issue with respect to *architectural styles and building materials*, Skinner seems to have misunderstood Mote's argument. The fact is that the urban structures exemplified by Skinner, larger and probably more sumptuously ornamented as they were, have proved to have not been so very distinct from other structures in the countryside, and at the same time to have found their similarities, though usually more humble and rustic, in some market towns and large villages. Whether certain buildings were supposed to have been located in urban or rural areas is usually indicated by the names given to them rather than by their style. It is also important to note that most of the examples cited by Skinner were associated with the city walls or wall-like structures; their distinctiveness was therefore gained, not by the buildings themselves, but by the symbol of the city - the wall. I will qualify this point later in Chapter Six.

If, however, the issue is to be dealt with in terms of the *functions* of urban

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customs.

201 We have seen that the bustling industrial and commercial areas of the city of Suzhou were outside the gates called Chang 閶 and Xu 胥 from which direct access was available to the Great Canal as the major trade route.

202 Whereas this observation apparently offers an illustration of the trait of urban-rural continuum, it seems to me that the architectural uniformity (in a loose sense of the word) within a certain region in China found its deeper implications in buildings or building complexes across functions and locations, rather than across urban and rural areas. A discussion of this will be given in Chapter Six.

structures, the typology of buildings based on their use becomes crucial in distinguishing what should usually be in the walled city and what might not. The following passage by Mote (1973:54) is very pertinent to this point:

> Although certain functions necessary to society had to be located where there were dense populations, there was no necessary pattern governing which functions should be located within the city wall and which outside. The lone exception is the executive level of civil administration itself. Local and regional governments were invariably located within city walls if such existed, and by the later imperial era they existed even at the county level in almost all cases.

The validity of this statement seems to depend on how inclusive the terms "the executive level of civil administration" or "local and regional governments" are with respect both to the institutions and to the buildings or building complexes, for within the city walls were located not only invariably the offices of regional or local administration (*yamen* 衙門) which were in most cases enclosed to form a building complex, but also many other structures which were not themselves administrative offices but were closely associated with some of the daily and annual functions of the government.

Imperial examination facilities are a good example to which Skinner has called our attention; prefectural and county schools which were usually combined with the Confucian temples (*Kongmiao* 孔廟) or temples of civilisation (*wenmiao* 文廟) are another important example; also located within the city walls, except for some rare cases like the one in the north suburb of Chengdu 成都 prefectural capital, were the "temples of city walls and moats" (*chenghuangmiao* 城隍廟) which have been regarded by Feuchtwang (1977:601) as "a spiritual office," wherein an incoming prefect or magistrate, probably since as early as the beginning of the Ming dynasty, firstly reported himself to the god and swore an oath before taking up office, and then led worship to the god on festivals, on the god's birthdays and during times of natural disasters; other structures, such as the prefectural or county storehouses and army barracks, were built in the city proper as well. Yet it should be stressed that all of these urban structures were established for the benefit of the whole jurisdictional area of the regional or local administration, that is, of the city and its surrounding countryside; and that they were located within the city walls simply because of their tight link with the governmental functions which collectively provided the *raison d'être* of regional and local cities in imperial China.

3.3.3 City Walls

There certainly existed a physical sign of definite demarcation of the city from the surrounding countryside - the city walls. It needs to be reiterated that the essential implication of the term *cheng* 城 with regard to city building is "city walls" or "to wall a city."[203] Walls, indeed, have been singularly important to the Chinese. Over and above practical considerations (preventing thievery, resisting attack, and the like), Meyer (1991:4) sees a symbolic and psychological meaning of walls in general in Chinese life:

> The wall is the line clearly drawn between what is significant and what is insignificant, what is powerful and what is not powerful, who is kin and who is stranger, what is sacred and not sacred.

Such a meaning certainly derived from the characteristic way in which the Chinese of ancient times perceived and shaped the world. It points to their ultimate desire - to create and maintain order as much in the minds of the individuals as in society, which should both be in accord with the Order of the world and the cosmos. With respect to city construction, this symbolic meaning is fully revealed in the records of the foundation of the city of Suzhou as the Wu capital in the Spring and Autumn period, which I have discussed in Chapter Two. Although great social and political transformation in the imperial era led to profound change in the nature of cities as regional or local administrative centres, a large part, if not all, of that fundamental meaning of walls remained, as did the drive of the Chinese to social and world order which it reflected. In this sense, Mote (1973:54, 1977:104) argues that city walls of imperial China served the primarily psychological function of marking the presence of the imperial government, rather than as real boundaries in daily life between an urban-within and a rural-without.[204]

Yet I would also suggest that, for many Chinese, the city walls may have further signified a social order in the whole area over which the city-based

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203 *Cheng* might indicate a walled settlement which we regard as a city; it might also mean a walled stronghold. It is therefore the common feature of walls of considerable size that really counts.

204 The psychological function of the walls of Nanjing 南京 and of other cities in Ming times after the harsh century of Mongol domination was, in Mote's (1977:137) words, that of "reaffirming the presence of the Chinese state." He reinforces his argument by claiming that "the Great Wall itself had little tactical significance," and asking in a rhetorical manner, "was its true significance not that of its psychological effect on the enemy, and conversely on the Chinese defender?" Meyer, (1991:4) too, has talked briefly about the symbolic gesture of the building of the Great Wall, but with a different emphasis.

regional or local government ruled. They conveyed in their prepossessing form a message to all the residents (both the urban and the rural) of the area: various forces were accorded and life went on under the rule of one single government which was as powerful and reliable as the walls. Let me cite two examples which, among many others, can be seen as supporting my point. In the face of the advancing Manchu forces in 1645, the residents of the city of Jiading 嘉定, then a subordinate county of Suzhou prefecture, "wept up towards the city wall," as recorded by Gu Gongxie 顧公燮, (XXZ, vol. A: "Jiading Jinshen Sinan") a local scholar of the eighteenth century. They cried because of the imminent fall of the city, and because of the slaughter and plunder that would be likely to ensue. Yet it seems not too far-fetched to interpret this record as implying the possible symbolism of the city wall, an emblem for these residents of the existing social order that was about to be overturned. The words of Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 of the Yuan in his memoir entitled *Pingjianglu Xinzhu Juncheng Ji* (PXJJ), recording the reconstruction of Suzhou city walls in 1351, reveals more explicitly the symbolic bond between the city walls as physical artefacts and the social order and security of the region:

> . . . Since the city walls have successfully been constructed today, which can be taken as a work of defence, from now onwards, what defence can be built on lies in the enlightened officials who carry forward the achievements of their predecessors, promulgate moral principles and cultivate the power of the people, so as to unite their hearts solidly. [This] will lead to the people of Suzhou loving and respecting the higher as sons and younger brothers love and respect their father and elder brothers. In this way, the people will take *renyi* 仁義 (lit. "benevolence and righteousness") as their shield and *liyue* 禮樂 (lit. "ceremony and music")[205] as their armour. Together with these [newly] consolidated city walls and moats, the unity of the people's hearts thus achieved will stand as the natural barrier forever.[206]

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205 There is no single-word definition for any of these terms of the Confucian moral codes. For discussions on them by modern scholars, cf., e.g., Mote 1971, Feng 1985, Schwartz 1985 and Graham 1989.

206 It also reminds us of an old proverb still widely in use, "the unity of the people's hearts makes walls" (*zhongxin chengcheng* 眾心成城), (*Guo Yu*, vol. 3: "Zhou Yu," C) which certainly indicates the belief that "unity is strength" and hence that the tenability of the city and its surrounding areas relies on the solidarity of people's minds. Another interesting incident also exemplifies this concept. At the end of the Song, defenders of Changzhou 常州 gallantly resisted attack by the Mongol army for over one month, while the officials at Suzhou simply surrendered in advance of any attack. This incident was then metaphorically referred to in the phrase "Pingjiang 平江 [i.e. Suzhou] [had] walls of iron but people of paper; Changzhou [had] walls of paper but people of iron." (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 145: "Zaji," no. 2)

This idea was not new. In a collection of texts known as *Guan Zi*, variously written between the fifth and first centuries B.C., we read:

> Proper and outer city walls, moats and ditches will not suffice to secure one's defences. Great strength of arms will not suffice to meet the enemy. Vast territory and wealth will not suffice to hold a large population. Only those who adhere to the true Way [Dao 道] are able to prepare for trouble before it arises. Therefore disasters will not germinate." (Vol. 1: "Mumin," no. 1)

By referring to another line in the *Guan Zi* expounding the sequential dependence of the preservation of territory upon first walls then grain,[207] Hay (1994a:13-4) argues that walls were seen as an internal differentiation supporting a material definition of the state: agriculture; and he acutely sees the passage cited above as revealing a conception that "through this sequence of dependencies runs the single lineage of ritual and ethical reference."[208] Even though by the late imperial period, the material prosperity of the Suzhou area depended more on commerce, trade and industry, than on agriculture alone, this particular, symbolic reference remained.

This is not to say that city walls did not have practical functions, but, as Murphy (1984:189) has indicated, "the walls were as imposing as the rank and size of the city dictated, but in every case were designed to awe and affirm, only secondarily to defend, although of course they might be useful in troubled times." That is, the walls assumed the role of physical barriers between the protected and unprotected areas only in times of real crisis, especially in case of a siege by insurgents. Since a war or a major disorder was usually brought about by rebellions against the current government, cities housing the administrative seats and representing the imperial authority inevitably became scenes of pitched battles or the objects of plunder. Consequently, cities were not necessarily regarded as safe bastions; on the contrary, it was in the countryside that people often sought refuge in times of turmoil.[209] Instances of this are numerous. In an anonymous document, *Wucheng Riji* (vol. 1) written in the early Qing, for example, this trend of exodus,

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207 *Guan Zi*, vol. 1: "Quanxiu," no. 3: "The preservation of territory depends upon city walls; the preservation of walls depends upon arms. The preservation of arms depends on men, and the preservation of men depends on grain. Therefore, unless a territory is brought under cultivation, its city walls will not be secure."

208 On this subject, Hay (op.cit. 14) remarks: "Discontinuities are always given meaning by continuity, and continuities are always signalled by discontinuities."

209 Both Mote (1977:104) and Chen Zhengxiang (1983:74) have mentioned a proverb (though slightly different in wording), "Major disorder occurred in the cities; minor disorders occurred in the countryside" (*daluan zaicheng, xiaoluan zaixiang* 大亂在城，小亂在鄉). It is referred to by Elvin (1978:87) as well.

from the city of Suzhou in the face of the Manchu advance, was repeatedly recorded. Similarly, according to Shen Shouzhi 沈守之, a late Qing dynasty Suzhou scholar, the magistrate of a county in Henan 河南 saved the local government's reserve of food and money and its documents by moving them to the countryside in 1853 in advance of the Taiping 太平 rebels' attack. (*Jiechao Biji*, "Xianling Qiaobi")

Moreover, since a city, in Mote's (1977:114) words, "did not defend itself; its defences were built by authority of the central government, to which all alike were subservient, and as part of its nation-wide defence system," and defending the city in a practical sense meant upholding the rule of the present government, and thus protecting the total administrative territory of which the city was the node and the symbol, rather than the area strictly within the walls.[210] Such activity might involve both the residents within the walls and people in the surrounding rural areas. In the summer of 1645 when incompetent officials were fleeing the countryside, it was the largely self-organised rural militia that entered the city of Suzhou and claimed to assume the task of resisting the Manchu conquest. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. A) To see it another way round, an attack on the city signified a direct challenge to the current authority, while the sack of it was equivalent to the rape of the government, and psychologically as disastrous to the whole jurisdictional area as to the city *per se*. Hence it is fair to say that if the city "existed for the sake of the country and not vice versa," - a statement made by Needham, which I have quoted earlier - its walls were built for maintaining an awesome sense of the government's presence and the established order, and accordingly for the psychological and practical benefit of both the city proper and the surrounding countryside. On this point, Mote (1977:138) makes a felicitous remark on the city walls: "They dignified cities; they did not bound them."

3.3.4 Transformability and Stability of Urban Form

Having said much about the practical and symbolic roles of city walls, I would venture an additional proposition that appears to have certain degree of validity for some imperial Chinese cities. There is a clear discrepancy between the realisation of numerous cases of urban expansion or shrinkage in imperial China, especially

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210 Murphy, (1984:190) from a reverse direction, acutely points out that the local capital city was responsible for the defence as well as the administration of the jurisdictional territory as a whole, and not merely for the defence of its own walled base. "It was," he writes succinctly, "truly a *centre* [sic], not an isolated or discrete intrusion."

from the Tang period onward, and the phenomenon acknowledged by such scholars as Mote and Skinner of the remarkable stability of urban form of some important cities, among which Suzhou is a notable instance. In Figures 3-16, 3-17 and 3-18, the juxtaposition of a picture map engraved on stone in 1229 and one in 1797, with a city map redrawn based on the survey of the city in 1916,[211] clearly indicates the fact that walls, moats and the position of city gates[212] have stayed identical in each case; the main streets and canals remain unchanged; many bridges and principal buildings are located on the same sites and bear the same names. While more extensive discussion on the historic process of reconstruction of the city walls, gates and other structures will be presented in Chapters Four and Five, it is sufficient for the time being to note that the walls enclosing a site occupied for well over two millennia assumed their present extent and precise location probably during the period between A.D. 626 and 875, if not earlier.

The discrepancy, however, seems to have derived from the confusion in the way in which the term "urban form" is to be defined.[213] Let us use the urban development of Suzhou to illustrate this point. To be sure, the stability of "urban form" appears extraordinary only if the morphology of the area determined and, above all, *enclosed* by city walls with gates is meant by that term. It is true that some of the principal structures within the city also bear to some extent this distinctive trait, as we notice from the three foregoing juxtaposed maps that the locations and, in some cases, the names of the structures remained unchanged, such as the Buddhist temples of Baoen 報恩 in the north, Dinghui 定慧 in the west and Ruiguang 瑞光 in the south with pagodas in them, the Daoist temple of Tianqing 天慶 (later called Yuanmiao 圓妙 and Xuanmiao 玄妙), the prefectural school-temple (*fuxue* 府學), and the garden of Canglang Ting 滄浪亭; others, however, experienced various degrees of alteration - either utterly disappeared or were

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211 This juxtaposition of city maps of Suzhou of different periods of time is produced under the inspiration of the ingenious overlay of the map made in 1229 and an aerial photograph made in 1945 initially by Mote (1973:40-1) and later borrowed by G. William Skinner. (1977a:14-5)

212 Xu 胥 Gate in the west wall by south was abandoned during the early Northern Song but restored to use in 1352. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi")

213 I have noted in section 3.2.4 Rowe's (1993:2) identification of some tension between Mote's conclusion of a remarkable long-term stability of urban form of Suzhou, and its urban growth from the Ming onwards. Here, what Mote means by "urban form" seems to be what was defined by the city walls, as he also acknowledges the development of commerce outside the city, in the suburbs to the west of the city of walls, extending along the Grand Canal; whereas Rowe refers to all the parts that were "urban" in quality, including the busy suburbs and the nearby market towns which are seen as incorporated into "a greatly enlarged metropolitan area."

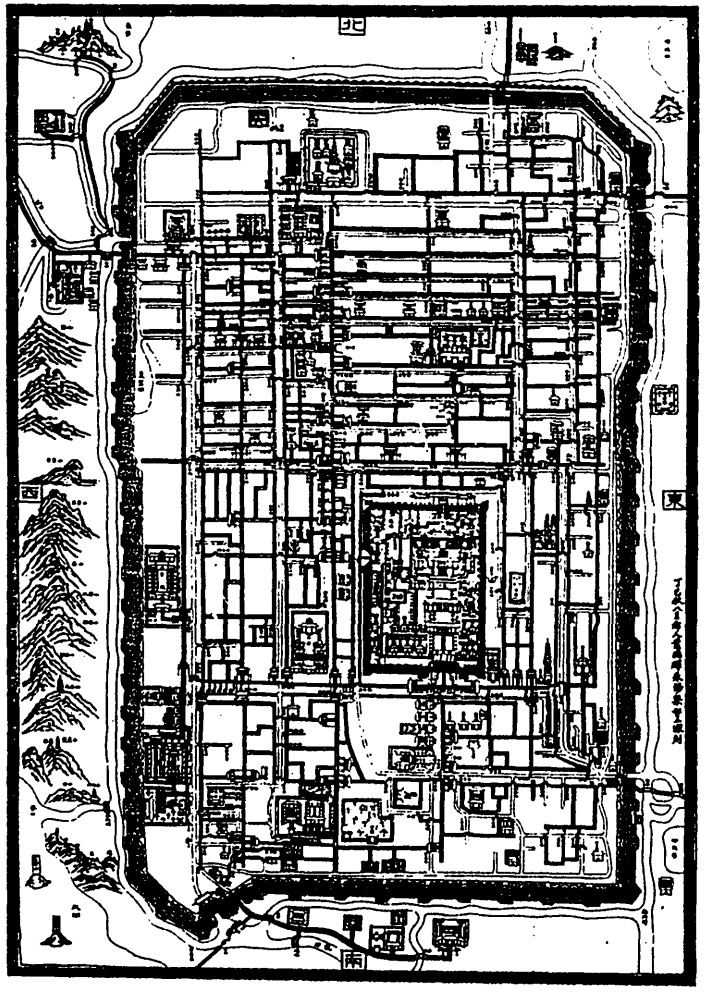

Figure 3-16 Picture map of the city of Suzhou in 1229, then known as Pingjiang. (JYCGBW 1988:348)

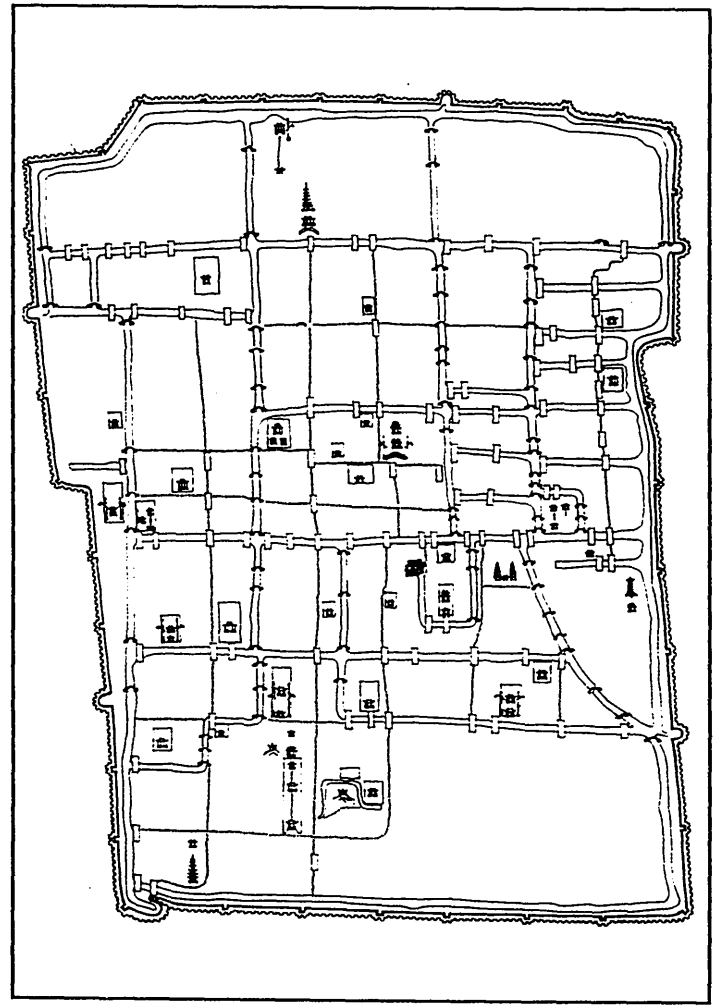

Figure 3-17 Picture map of the city of Suzhou, redrawn from the map engraved on stone in 1797. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

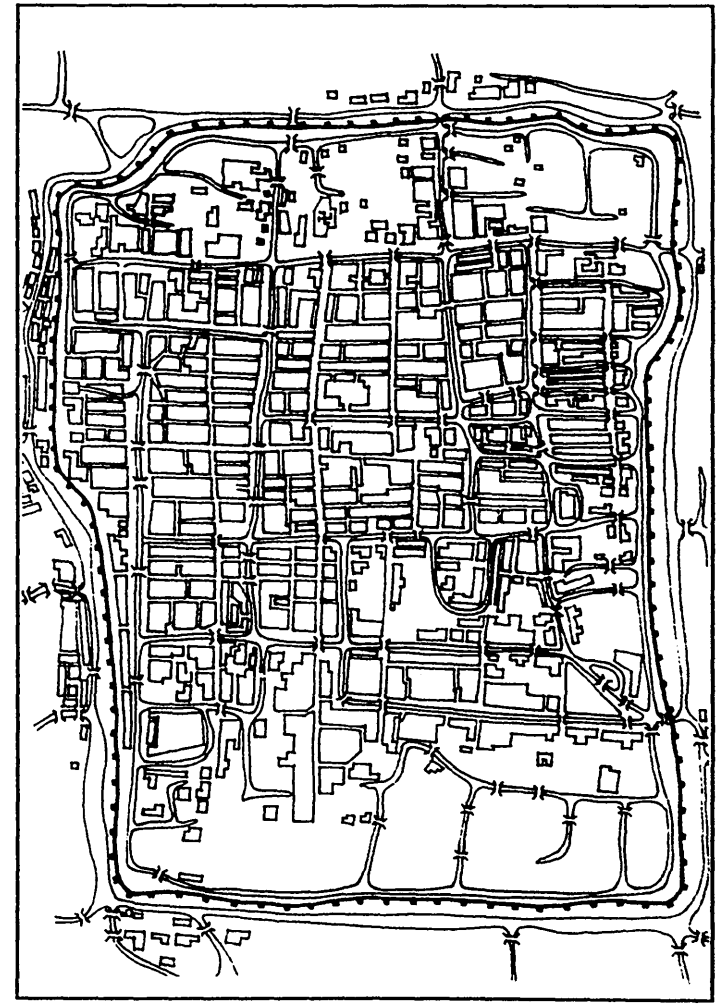

Figure 3-18 Map of the city of Suzhou redrawn based on the survey in 1916. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

moved to other sites or changed in function and name.

The most notable change which had a profound impact on the internal urban spatial pattern of the city has been the removal of the inner-city walls originally built to enclose the local governmental seat, a change that was largely the result of contemporary political requirements. (See section 5.2 for details of the incident) However, what can be said about the western suburban areas which gradually developed into the central business district? They were surely more "urban," in terms of population density, man-made spatial arrangement, and social and economic activities, than many parts of the land within the walls, which were either derelict or used as fields to grow crops or vegetables. The growth of these areas thus indicates change, at times slow and at others radical. During the Ming and Qing periods, the city walls were repeatedly restored; and especially in 1662, large scale reconstruction work on the walls was implemented. (See, e.g., *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi") Why were additional walls not built to enclose that densely populated business district in the west suburbs, one that appears to have been very important to the city and prefecture, for a period of four centuries, at least in an economic sense?[214]

It seems clear that it was largely the form and location of the city walls and gates that were responsible for the remarkable continuity and stability of urban form in time. I would therefore hypothesise that this trait of the development of Chinese cities was not only brought about by various material factors, such as any particular city's topographical conditions (the formation of the network of city canals in particular), financial situations and political decisions,[215] but was also influenced by the Chinese sense of the authority of the past, by the accumulated weight of history, and, above all, by the dual characteristics of the institutionalisation and symbolisation of city walls in imperial China. Some support for the argument can be obtained from ways in which the construction of city walls was recorded in the imperial periods. It was certainly not uncommon for a traditional Chinese historian to start his section on the evolution of the city walls and moats (*chengchi* 城池) with the opening words which Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-

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214 During the 1550s *wokou* 倭寇 (Japanese pirates) crisis, proposals for building new city walls to enclose the west suburb were put forward, but did not materialise. See section 5.3 for details.

215 In the case of Suzhou, the existing network of city canals also played a significant role in its morphological stability in time. We will have occasions to return to this in Chapters Four and Five.

1524) writes in his *Gusu Zhi* (vol. 16: "Chengchi"): "Wherever there is the need to set up a defence of the state, there must be city walls and moats." It is also not surprising that, in all local gazetteers of different historic periods, a paraphrased account of the early construction and form of the city is always the opening and often the major part of that section. What seems worth emphasising, however, is that the successive construction works during later periods are phrased as the city walls, moats and gates were "*re*-built or *re*-constructed" in all cases except for the account of the event in 1662, wherein the terms "constructed with alteration" are used.[216] (See, e.g., *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi") Such typical ways of recording seem to indicate that urban form at the time of the recorded city foundation was conceived as *the* timeless entity which had not, as it should not, been altered, but only renovated. In other words, conceptually and probably physically, as the *Wuxian Zhi* (vol. 18: "Chengchi") has put it, it had long become "the fixed institution from antiquity to the present time."

I have explained why I agree with Mote and Murphy that the city walls signalled the presence of the government; I have also further suggested that they symbolised the existence of social and political order, and of the long tradition that the city boasted. Hence, of utmost importance is what they *stood for* rather than what they enclosed. This conceptual predilection is implied in a passage of commentary in the *Wuxian Zhi* (ibid.):

> For two thousand years those who have come to renovate [the city walls and moats] followed on the heels of one another. Having by turns assumed [the task of] repeated investigation of their predecessors' achievements, [we] understand their good intention: their assiduity came from the realisation that the cultural and historic relics [of Suzhou] were second to none in the South-east. This is like valuing the jewels highly but at the same time also being fond of the casket [*bao zhuyu jian'ai qi du* 寶珠玉兼愛其櫝].[217] [Since] they [the city walls] are also one of the

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216 Ironically, from a comparison of the city maps of the Southern Song, Ming and Qing periods, we know that the city form enclosed and determined by the walls was obviously *not* altered by the construction work of this time. See section 4.3.

217 For a better understanding of the meaning this phrase conveys, a few words are needed here about the artistic use of an old proverb which derives from a story told in the *Hanfei Zi* (vol. 11: "Waichu Shuo," Left A) compiled in the third century B.C. A man from the state of Chu 楚 came to Zheng 鄭 to sell a precious pearl which was contained in a lavishly ornamented casket. Curiously, a man of Zheng bought the casket but gave back the pearl which was supposed to be sold. The proverb *maidu huanzhu* 買櫝還珠 (lit. "buying the casket and returning the pearl") has later come to denote "to attend to trifles to the neglect of essentials." Likewise, although it is the cultural achievements and historic relics of Suzhou region that were the essential and precious things, the city walls as the symbolic casket, instead of being treated as trifles, were equally highly regarded.

> principal institutions of the region, who can say that they need not be passed on?

The metaphor of the casket aptly epitomises the phenomenon that the symbolic role of the city walls far out-weighed the practical one: they functioned more as a symbol of the existence of the prefecture, and of the solidity and continuity of its social order and cultural achievements, than as a physical defence work which only enclosed a tiny (though more concentrated) part of the prefectural territory. In this sense, continuity is visible in those institutional and symbolic values endowed in the walls, and, in the course of remarkable urban expansion driven by economic growth and socio-political change, the stability of the city form determined by the walls and gates appears to be in line with the urge of the Chinese to maintain the tradition.

3.4 GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I have presented in this chapter a number of important characteristics of the general development of cities in imperial China. They indicate that any sweeping generalisation about Chinese cities in space and time may lead to over-simplification of their remarkably continuous, and yet highly complex, urban history. They constitute the wider context of that distinctive history, in which the city of Suzhou will be examined more closely in the following four chapters. In order for the reader to keep in mind these general characteristics as the study proceeds, a brief summary of them is necessary.

It is important to reiterate firstly that it proves to be illusive and misleading to talk about *the* Chinese city either as a constructed ideal type which seemingly provides a set of conclusions in the form of generalisations, or as one of the actual cities which symbolises Chinese culture as a whole. China's cities and the process of their development, as it were, were highly differentiated in their administrative status, geographical locations, conditions of local economic development, process of urban construction and transformation, and so forth. This range of significant width in time and space has led to the realisation that, in the words of Samuels, (1978:713; cf. Skinner 1977a:5) "no one ideal construct can suffice to explain the varied and complex history of urban China." Also, there has not been a single city ever standing as the hub and the symbol of the history and cultural achievements of Chinese civilisation. This distinctive phenomenon of urbanisation in imperial China

has been asserted by Mote (1977:101-2) in a sweeping comparative manner, as he states,

> No single great city has either dominated Chinese civilisation in the way that Rome and Constantinople dominated phases of Roman history or typified Chinese civilisation in the way that Paris and London typify for us the French and the English civilisations.[218]

He also suggests, as I believe was the case, that the concept of the "provincial" as opposed to the "metropolitan" did not exist in China, especially from Tang times onward, as it did in the cultural life of Europe. (Op.cit. 118) Indeed, the cultural and material life of some of the Yangzi Valley provinces was recognised as being superior to that of the capitals and the provinces adjacent to them in the North.

Arguments in this direction are not meant to deny that pre-modern Chinese cities are in comparative perspective a distinct cultural type, nor to neglect the fact that in the national capital, careers were different in character and prestige from those in the provinces, and architectural features were often more splendid and imposing. Instead, they stress the necessity that any single city is to be considered as part of a continuous tradition of city building. The city of Suzhou should thus be regarded as a particular instance characterised by unique features wherein the nature of the urban form and space development of China's cities is more or less embedded, rather than as a paradigm which inclusively speaks for "the Chinese city" as a whole.

A regional or local walled city was invariably a sub-centre of the imperial government; that is, it was a node in the administrative hierarchy. Its managerial role over the territory in which the city was located was embodied in the position of the county magistrate, prefect or provincial governor, who, through his court and assistants, was officially responsible for everyone and everything within that territory.[219] Yet in terms of cosmological symbolism of the government, a regional

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218 Mote (ibid.) then offers two explanations for this phenomenon: (1) China has been too vast a cultural and political area for three millennia or more to have been dominated by one city; and (2) Chinese civilisation has not granted the same importance to typically urban activities that other civilisations have, and thus the Chinese have never felt the impulse to create one great city that would express and embody their urban ideals, nor has the urban sector in the aggregate typified or dominated the tone of Chinese life.

219 As Murphy (1984:189) has noted, in practice it was impossible for the local government officials based in cities to carry out close administration of so large a population, the great majority of it being rural-agricultural. "Unofficial, but often powerful, local gentry and peasant village elders or clans managed the bulk of rural . . .

or local city was fundamentally differentiated from the imperial capital - it was not the imperial capital writ small. It should not be perceived as a "cosmic centre" on a smaller scale. Such a differentiation is indirectly reflected in an interesting remark by Wu Yifeng 吳翌鳳 (1742-1819), a scholar from Changzhou county, on the customary way in which his contemporaries humbly addressed their own home regions:

> Nowadays many an individual calls [his/her home region] "my humble [*bi* 敝] county" or "my humble prefecture" or "my humble province." [This custom] started from [the use of] *biyi* 敝邑 [lit. "my humble town"] in the *Zuo Zhuan*, [which was] probably a self-depreciatory expression. The lone exception is the imperial capital district: it is the place where the most revered [*zhizun* 至尊, i.e. the Emperor] is present, and no one dares to use the character *bi* [to refer to it]. (*Dengchuang Conglu*, vol. 1)

Any region, regardless of its administrative level, constituted but a subordinate part of the empire, and its capital was merely *a* city of certain political or economic importance. Under the supreme rule of the Son of Heaven, it was not differentiated from others in cosmological terms. It was the imperial capital (or its district) alone that was symbolically regarded as *the* cosmic, most revered centre.

The process of formation and transformation of urban space in China varied across socio-geographical regions. In overall perspective, many local cities on the North China Plain were older, with their rational fortified patterns imposed from above and other urban structures later gradually filling in, than most of the cities in the South which were later and closer to their unplanned origins, on which some degree of planning was superimposed.

The city of Suzhou in this sense appears to have been one of the few exceptional cases in the south-east region and thus to have shown some traits similar to those of the cities in the North. The enclosed area of the cities under this category was more likely to have been determined so as to match their administrative status than in consideration of their future growth. Thus an evident dichotomised process of development can be detected from these cities, especially from those of economically advanced regions: on the one hand, urban business development from the Tang-Song period onward was skewed towards and very often beyond the city gates, affording direct access to the major commercial trade routes,

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affairs. It was a closely ordered society, . . . [and] the combined force of family, clan, gentry, and nearly universally accepted Confucian morality kept order remarkably well in what we may call a largely self-regulating society."

and on the other hand, city walls were persistently reconstructed on the same site enclosing an area within which many parts remained derelict or as farming land. In a word, there co-existed two seemingly contradictory features of the urban expansion in space and the stability of city form defined by the walls. This distinct phenomenon may be explained by, and at the same time seems to strengthen, a realisation of the salient institutional and symbolic role that the city walls played in society, of the characteristic way in which the cities functioned, and of the distinctive relationship between the city and countryside.

The functions of Chinese cities were not peculiar. Setting aside the chicken-or-egg question of whether trade created cities or cities made trade, it can be assumed that a long-standing inseparability of cities and trade existed in Chinese antiquity; and in the imperial era, especially from the Tang onward, domestic commerce which grew increasingly important exerted strong influence on the location and growth of cities. It should also be acknowledged that most of China's cities were multi-functional - apart from the most obvious administrative and economic functions, those of the military, of transport and communication, of religion, of cultural life, of intellectual activities, and of education were also part of the Chinese urban scene. Yet whereas most of the activities of Chinese and Western cities look very similar in a broad view, it is the way in which those activities were exercised that renders the Chinese situation sharply distinctive from that of Europe. This certainly necessitates further extensive examination, but one thing seems worth noting at this stage: because every walled city in imperial China was the administrative centre of an area which was largely rural, the city, if seen as a different entity from the countryside, functioned not as much as a locus generating and protecting these activities as a hub within the hierarchically ordered urban system of *organising* these activities. "These activities," Mote (1977:110) writes, "all existed within the particular dynamics of Chinese society, were ordered by Chinese government, and expressed Chinese cultural values."

I have emphasised that the cities in imperial China were not a corporate entity of their own which possessed separate legal and political status. They functioned primarily as an instrument of the centralised government, and were centres of political and economic power of the empire. Yet paradoxically, these cities, as Elvin (1978:85) phrases it, "played a limited role in pre-modern Chinese political history," in the sense that they were not centres of political change until the traditional fabric was rent by the growth of Western-inspired treaty-ports in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[220] Trade alone in imperial China could not rival administration as an urban foundation, even when some cities' economic centrality had come to far outweigh their administrative status. There was little civic awareness among urban residents and merchant sojourners, nor any sense of municipal arrogance or power, nor concept of municipal self-government. Consequently, the cities did not show the traits of cities in dual societies.[221]

Of course, the development of this last aspect of China's urban system was a gradual process. If the Qin unification formally brought an end to the urban-rural socio-economic dichotomy, the medieval urban revolution during the Tang-Song period practically made manifest what may loosely be termed an "urban-rural continuum" both as physical and organisational realities and as an aspect of Chinese psychology; and, as Skinner (1977a:28) has observed, if the regional city systems that developed in the Tang-Song period were immature and uneven, in the sense that cities and market towns were only very imperfectly meshed into an integrated system, and that the urban population as a whole was concentrated in the largest cities, city systems of the Ming-Qing period were more mature and more fully fleshed out, in the sense that cities and market towns were better integrated into a single hierarchical system, and that the total urban population was more evenly distributed throughout the hierarchy. Arguments in the direction of urban-rural continuum are not to imply any neglect of those urban aspects that caused Suzhou be called a "city", nor are they meant to deny those characteristics of cities which were absent from the countryside, but to emphasise that this unique trait of urban-rural relationship was probably one of the crucial factors which rendered China's cities distinct from those of Europe.

This distinctive relationship between the city and the countryside not only manifested itself in evidence from the physical form of cities, the structure and character of cultural activities, the religious establishments, and to some extent the pattern of economic life, but was also reflected in building styles and layout which could be differentiated among regional variations rather than between urban and

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220 As Elvin (op.cit. 88) has noted, no rebellion against the imperial regime ever originated in the cities apart from a few strikes by urban workers after the seventeenth century and occasional closures of the market by merchants as a form of political pressure. But these could not seriously have toppled the imperial government, and would certainly not have challenged the basic nature of the existing order. For a comparative study of the city as a centre of change between China and Europe, see Murphy 1954.

221 Similarly, no rivalry between cities in aesthetic or religious projects developed in the way in which the cities of medieval and Renaissance Europe did.

rural characteristics. In other words, there was rarely such a thing as might be called "urban architecture" in traditional China. Apart from those which were closely bonded with the walls, such as the gate towers and the drum and bell towers, edifices that were supposed to be located exclusively within the city were identified by names attached to them and sometimes by their grand scale, rather than by type, style and spatial arrangement. Their distinctiveness was essentially associated with the city walls and wall-like structures which were emblematic of the city. More discussions on this distinctive characteristic of Chinese architecture will be given in section 6.1.

CHAPTER 4 THE CITY WALLS AND GATES

This chapter and the following two (Chapters Five and Six) focus on some of the physical aspects of the development of the city of Suzhou in the imperial era, which may be regarded, through a modern eye, as closer to what really existed or happened, although the study is still largely based on the available historic documents and paintings. When we talk about the city in the imperial era, our discussions should cover urban features and events in the whole period from the Qin unification in 211 B.C. to the end of the Qing in A.D. 1911. However, the present research is not a historiography of the city construction of Suzhou, but aims at producing a number of important points in China's city development by using the history of this city as a specific example. Therefore, since the city gained its importance from the mid-Tang onward, and the proliferation of literary and pictorial materials also started from that time, the emphasis of this study is accordingly laid on the second half of the imperial era - the period between the ninth and the early twentieth centuries.

The chapter on the development of the city walls is given pride of place here because of the physical and symbolic importance of walls in Chinese urban history, which I have argued extensively in the previous chapters. I present in it what we know about the walls of the city of Suzhou in the imperial era, by comparing the literary records with city maps which I have so far gathered. For the convenience of discussion, I produce three tables, each being located in the relevant section and in turn listing the events of wall construction and restoration, the recorded sectional dimensions of the walls, and the information about the city gates in a chronological order. They give an adequate periodical context of building activity and physical aspects of these artefacts, wherein stress can be laid only on the most significant features and changes.

4.1 "THE UNTRANSFERABLE TERRAIN"

Little is known about the walls during the period from the fall of the state of Wu to A.D. 876 when the then incumbent prefect, Zhang Tuan 張摶 rebuilt them. Whereas in the eyes of Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1041-1100), the walls and moats and the names of the gates "continued without change" from the end of Wu, through

the ages of the Qin, Han and Tang, to the Northern Song, (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Chengyi") scholars of later periods, notably from the Ming onward, (see, e.g., *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") seem to have been more cautious about this issue by only suggesting that these features of the city "followed their original form" until A.D. 591 when the city was temporarily transferred to a new site. Indeed, tradition has it that for over two and a half millennia the city of Suzhou has remained at exactly the same site on which it was originally built, except for a short transitional period from the Sui 隋 to the Tang 唐. Although the Sui had conquered the Southern Chen 陳 in the Lower Yangzi valley and reunified China in A.D. 589, the remnant forces of Chen were still actively harassing the new authority around the Suzhou region. According to Zhu Changwen, Yang Su 楊素 (?-A.D. 606), a Sui minister who was at the time in charge of quelling these local rebellions, saw that the city of Suzhou was vulnerable to a siege because of the unsuitability of the site for establishing tenable defences, and thus with royal permission "moved" the city in A.D. 591[222] to the east foot of Mt. Heng 橫[223] which, as Figure 4-1 shows, is located to the south-east of the old site. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Chengyi") Zhu Changwen then gives a more detailed account of this event:

> Yang Su . . . moved the prefectural capital to the foot of Mt. Heng, probably intending to empty the old city. . . . In the early stage when Yang Su transferred the city to Mt. Heng, the artisans used timbers of *zhu* 櫧 [a kind of oak] as the pillars of the city gates. [Yang] Su noticed and asked the artisans, "These timbers may not be sufficiently strong. How many years could they last?" The artisans said, "Forty years without rotting." "That would be sufficient," [Yang] Su said. "This walled city will be abandoned in fewer than forty years." At the end of the years of the Wude 武德 reign-period [A.D. 618-626][224] [the prefectural capital] was transferred back to the old city, just as he predicted. (Op.cit. vol. C: "Wangji")

What caused the resumption of the old city is not clear to us. It is possible that the size and form of the new city which was hastily constructed were unsuitable for its practical and symbolic functions as a local governmental centre. It is also possible that the new site proved to be poor in communications and transport, or prone to natural disasters such as flood. Yet, whatever the reason, its significance to some Chinese scholars seems to have lain elsewhere. This is reflected in Zhu Changwen's comment on it that those who later resumed the old city "probably

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222 The *Wudi Ji* claims that the move of the city happened in A.D. 589.

223 This mountain was also called Mt. Juhu 踞湖, (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Shan") and later Mt. Qizi 七子. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 6: "Shan," no. 1)

224 The *Suzhoufu Zhi* claims that it occurred in A.D. 626.

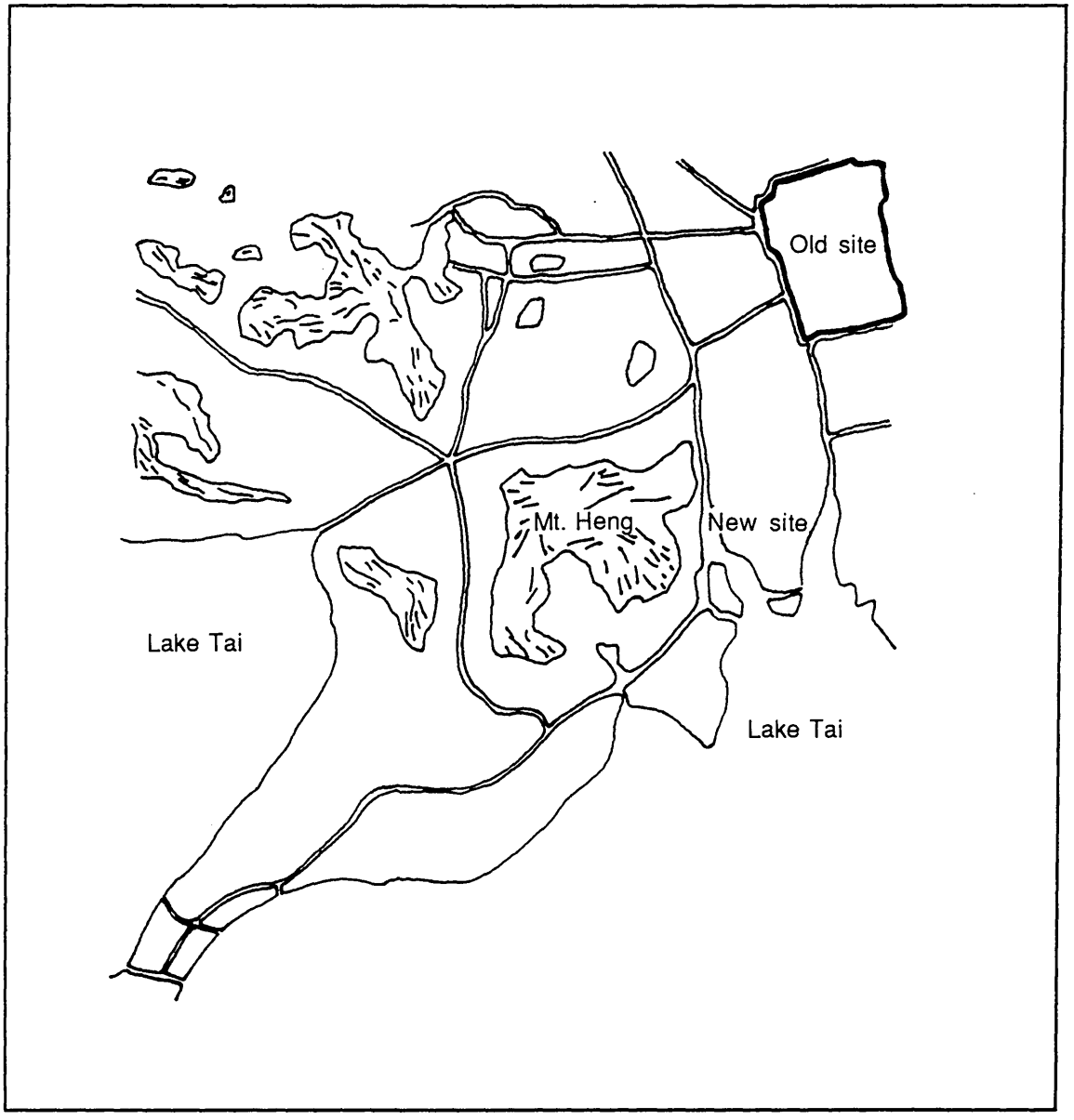

Figure 4-1 Location of the new prefectural city of Suzhou from A.D. 591 to the 620s, speculated on the basis of literary records. This diagrammatic map is adapted from *Suzhoufu Zhi*: "Wuxian Tu" and *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 1: "Tu."

comprehend the untransferability of the terrain (*dishi zhi buke qian ye* 地勢之不可遷也)." (Op.cit. vol. 1: "Chengyi") It is understandable that, after three and a half centuries of disintegration, the nation-wide defences of the newly established Sui authority were fragile and incomplete. The walled city as the symbol of power was in this situation more subject to a siege, and its security may, as Zhu (ibid.) has reasoned, therefore have been regarded as a priority of governmental practice at that particular time. As a result, the new site which was supposed to be more militarily tenable seems to have been preferable.

However, the new site may not have been perceived as an appropriate place for a city of considerable importance, but only as an expedient choice during a specific period in history. As has been indicated by Skinner, (1977c:262) it was the Chinese view in general that the geomantic fate of a prefecture or county derived from the siting of its capital city. The prosperity and stability of a prefecture thus demanded not only the tenability of the site of its capital, which certainly proved crucial at times of crisis, but also that of the stretch of land with its specific natural features in which local history was embedded. It was here that were concentrated practical works of irrigation, water conservancy, transport, and so forth; it was also here that cultural heritage and legends were most densely accumulated. Yet more importantly, the long conceived *raison d'être* of the city's being located at this particular site had probably become so deeply rooted in the mind of the imperial officials that the abandonment of the site could in the long run hardly have been acceptable. Indeed, the city could be "moved" to a new site with all parts of its necessary institutions being re-established there, but it could not move its natural environs which altogether constituted what this city had been and therefore should be. A city became meaningful and culturally valid to the Chinese only if it was coherently embedded in its natural surroundings where history had been deposited.

At this moment, I have to make a digression, because one of the ideas revealed in this event may seem a little strange to a Westerner - that is, the moving of the city. In the West, cities may rise and fall, and capitals may be relocated from one city to another; but a city as such would not move.[225] In other words, the old city

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225 The unfamiliarity of this notion to Westerners was identified by the late Professor C.B. Wilson in July 1992 when he commented on one of my papers on the history of the city of Suzhou. This phenomenon, however, seems to have been more common in Far Eastern Countries. Nara 奈良 of Japan, for example, was officially established in A.D. 710 as Heijo-kyo 平京城, the "capital city of peace." Yet the capital was moved again in 784

housing the governmental seat which was moved to another city would not be abandoned utterly and deliberately. A statement like this clearly presupposes the separation of the notion of the city as a physical entity from that of the capital as a political instrument, i.e. the seat of government of a nation or region; and it is exactly in the conceptual and practical sense of the relationship between the two categories - city and capital - that lies the discrepancy between the Chinese and Western experiences and attitudes.

I have discussed in Chapter Three how a Chinese city was not a corporate entity of its own but a governmental seat of the region in which it was located; a city as such had to have a set of formal institutions and their physical establishment had to be appropriate to its status and function - the most conspicuous being the city walls (*cheng* 城) which were meant to protect the current authority against rebellions and banditry, and to symbolise the presence of the government and social order. Thus, a city as an administrative centre not enclosed with city walls was inconceivable to the Chinese; or to put it conversely, a walled city in which governmental functions were essentially absent would be so conceptually absurd as to render it practically unviable to remain a city. In this sense, a walled city and a capital did not fall into two different categories at all; a walled city could only be a capital and vice versa.[226] The physical city largely built with ephemeral materials therefore had to "go" with the capital to whichever new site was chosen by the imperial government, which alone had the authority to do such choosing.

This practice has been abundantly evidenced in the history of Chinese city construction. A site was often left derelict after the capital based on it was transferred elsewhere or abolished, and later may or may not have had another settlement superimposed on it, usually of a much smaller scale and with its spatial structure probably very different from that of the previous one. There were also cases, such as that of Ming and Qing dynasty Hangzhou, which had housed the imperial capital of the Southern Song; and that of Nanjing which was designated as the imperial capital of the Ming between A.D. 1368 and 1421. They ceased

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and the physical form of the city and of its architecture was thereafter gradually buried beneath the mud of the paddy fields which spread over the ruins of the city. (Coaldrake 1991:37-8)

226 Whereas many villages and a number of towns were encircled by walls, these walls, however, like those of a house, a temple, etc., were not termed *cheng* 城 which at once denotes both "city" and "city walls." Only those walls of vast size, which acquired certain somewhat institutionalised configurational elements and, above all, enclosed the proper establishments of imperial government, were entitled to be called by this exclusive term.

thereafter to be the imperial capitals but their spatial structures remained, because they functioned in later times as provincial capitals, and many of the governmental establishments, except for the imperial palatial complex and temples, were thus justifiably kept alive. The prediction by Yang Su in A.D. 591 and the realisation of the resumption of the city of Suzhou as the prefectural capital demonstrate exactly the inseparability of the walled city from its status as the regional capital which it was meant to be.

4.2 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WALLS

Table 4-1 which contains records of the rebuilding and restoration of the walls from the early construction of the city in 514 B.C. to the late Qing, with relatively more important events emphasised with asterisks, shows that the first recorded reconstruction of the walls of the city of Suzhou did not occur until the late Tang. We do not know how many times the walls were repaired, if not rebuilt, during the period from the fall of the state of Wu to A.D. 876, and it is hard to imagine that in this span of over thirteen centuries no works of wall restoration ever took place, and that the walls of the city consequently "followed their original form" - a suggestion made by later scholars and probably based on the information scattered in some of the poems and rhymed prose-poems prior to A.D. 876. Indeed, the physical features of the city at the time of the Western Jin 晉 have been described by Zuo Si 左思 (*c.* A.D. 250-*c.* A.D. 305) in his rhymed prose-poem *Wudu Fu*:

> The outer walls [*fuguo* 郛郭] enclose [the city] *in toto*,
> Heavily built are the middle walls [*cheng* 城] and consolidated are their corners;
> Open are two sets [land and water] of eight gates [on the middle walls],
> [Connected by a network of] Water routes and land roads [in the city].

These features except for the outer walls must have continued to exist during the second half of the Tang period, because they are all mentioned in the *Wudi Ji* and in some of the Tang poems.[227] Yet we do not know for certain when exactly the city

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227 Cf. Liu Yuxi's 劉禹錫 (A.D. 772-842), *Baisheren Cao Chang Ji Xinshi You Youyan zhi Sheng yinyi Xichou* 白舍人曹長寄新詩有游宴之盛因以戲酬, (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 360) Xu Hun's 許渾 (the first half of the ninth century), *Song Yuanzhou Shangren Gui Suzhou Jianji Zhanghou* 送元晝上人歸蘇州兼寄張厚, (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 536) and Bai Juyi's 白居易 (A.D. 772-846), *Jiuri Yanji Zuiti Junlou Jiancheng Zhou Yin Erpan'guan* 九日宴集醉題郡樓兼呈

Table 4-1 Records of the construction of the city walls of Suzhou[1]

Dynasty	Year	Event	Measurement
Eastern Zhou	514 B.C.	*Early construction	(a) 47 *li* 210 *bu* 2 *chi* in perimeter;[2] (b) 37 *li* 161 *bu* in perimeter[3]
Tang	A.D. 876	*Reconstruction	12 *li* long north-south; 9 *li* long east-west;[4] 42 *li* 30 *bu* in perimeter
Later Liang	922	Brick and stone facing for the first time[5]	
Northern Song	1110s	Restoration[5]	
	1123	Strengthening of the brick and stone facing	
Southern Song	*c.* 1180s	Restoration[5]	
	1223	*Reconstruction[5]	
	1254	Heightening of the parapets[5]	
	1259	Restoration[5]	
Yuan	1351	*Reconstruction[5]	
Ming	*c.* late 1360s	*Reconstruction	(a) *Zhou* (lit. "perimeter"): 34 *li* 53 *bu* 9 *fen*;[5] (b) 4482 *zhang* 6 *chi* 5 *cun* in length[6]
	1642	Restoration[7]	
Qing	1662	*Reconstruction	(a) *Zhou* (lit. "perimeter"): 45 *li*;[8] (b) *chang* (lit. "length"): 5605 *zhang*[9]
	1729	Repair[10]	
	1730	Repair[10]	
	1838	Repair[10]	
	1860	Repair[10]	

1 Recorded measurements of the walls in different historical period are incorporated.
2 *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2.
3 Ibid. This figure is the sum total of the lengths of the four sides of the walled city. See section 2.3.3.
4 *Wudi Ji* (Main text and the "Houji" part).
5 *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16.
6 Ibid. This figure is the sum total of the lengths of the walls between every two of the six city gates. For more details, see section 4.3.
7 GTJ, 114/62.
8 *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20.
9 Ibid. See section 4.3.
10 *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4.

acquired its general form that was to be retained in the later periods of its development, although it is not impossible that this had occurred by the mid-Tang.

During the final years of the Tang, frequent rebellions occurred in the South-east. As a result, the city of Suzhou met with recurrent sieges and damage. The most notable of such incidents took place in A.D. 875, when a local military commander, Wang Ying 王郢, rose against the Tang government and took the cities of Suzhou and Changzhou 常州. (See, e.g., *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 252: "Tangji," no. 68: "Xizong" in the 2nd year of the Qianfu 乾符 reign-period) Although the rebels were soon crushed by a Tang task-force, the city was severely damaged when pitched battles were fought during the siege. In the following year, the city walls were rebuilt under the direction of the prefect Zhang Tuan. (Cf. *Wudi Ji*, "Houji;" *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. 3: "Wangji") This is the first known recorded reconstruction of the city since it was built in 514 B.C. Yet the significance of this record lies not only in the information it contains about the city form right after the construction work in A.D. 876, but also in its implications about the city probably *before* that time, as in its accounts of the number of the rivers, old residential wards and bridges, all of which were unlikely to have been built from scratch. The walls were strengthened with brick and stone facing in A.D. 922 for the first time.[228]

The area of Suzhou saw few destructive wars during the Northern Song period and thus only two occasions of moderate repair of the walls are recorded. However, probably unprecedented damage was inflicted on the city in the wake of the fall of the Northern Song by the Jurchen (Jin 金) invasion of the region. According to the *Song Shi*, (vol. 26: "Benji," no. 26: "Gaozong," no. 3) on their way back from Lin'an 臨安 (present-day Hangzhou) in A.D. 1130 after driving the Song court to the South-east, the Jurchen cavalry entered the city, local officials having fled before hand, and "soldiers set fire and plundered unrestrainedly."[229] Perhaps due to the

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周殷二判官. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 444) Note that the eight gates may not have been entirely in accord with those of the city at the time of its early construction. A full discussion of them is presented in section 4.5.

228 The earliest source of this information comes from a passage quoted by Lu Xiong 盧熊 of the Ming in his *Suzhoufu Zhi* from Li Zong'e's 李宗諤 *Xiangfu Tujing* 祥符圖經 which was written in the 1010's but has long been lost. (SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi")

229 Wang Mingqing 王明清 of the Southern Song gives a more detailed account of the event in his *Huizhu Lu* 揮麈錄 ("Houlu," vol. 10):

> On the twenty-fifth day [of the second month], . . . the Jin soldiers having entered [the city] through Pan Gate, plundered governmental offices and residents' houses of their treasures and children and women, and looted state storehouses of their goods in stock. [They] set [the city] extensively on fire, with smoke and flame being seen two

political and financial straits in which the Southern Song government was left, the restoration of the damaged infrastructure of the city was not carried out until the middle of the Chunxi 淳熙 reign-period (A.D. 1174-1189) when the prefect Xie Shiji 謝師稷 conducted the work at the cost of the remaining sum of four hundred thousand *min* 緡 (i.e. "strings of cash") from the prefectural taxes (*xianyu* 羨餘). This reconstruction work must have been very incomplete, because only twenty or thirty years later nearly half of the walls had already crumbled or collapsed, and the city moats were largely invaded by marshes. Thus in 1223, supported by the Southern Song prime minister Shi Miyuan 史彌遠 who successfully applied for a royal grant to finance the project, the prefects Zhao Rushu 趙汝述 and Shen Hao 沈晧 successively directed the restoration of the walls and moats. The work lasted for thirteen months, and the reconstructed walls and moats were regarded by contemporary and later scholars as unsurpassed in the South-east.[230] The result of this reconstruction work is evidenced by the remarkable picture map of the city, known as the *Pingjiang Tu* 平江圖 (picture map of Pingjiang [city]), engraved in 1229 on a stone slab measuring 2.79m by 1.38m, the map on it measuring 1.97m by 1.36m. (See Figure 4-2)[231]

The Mongol conquerors ordered the levelling of many city walls and the refilling of their moats in the 1280s early in the reign of the Yuan dynasty Emperor Shizu 世祖, Hubilie 忽必列 (known in the West as Khubilai Khan). (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") Liu Zhiping (1987:8) and Mote (1973:53) are probably right in seeing this action as removing bastions of Chinese resistance to

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> hundred *li* away for five days and nights. At the beginning of the third month, [the Jin soldiers] left the city from Chang Gate. Those residents who managed to escape from the city amounted to only two or three out of ten, while those who failed to do so and were thus slaughtered amounted to six or seven out of ten. . . . Innumerable dead bodies were scattered about on streets and alleys, and in rivers and canals. The noise of wailing thundered the skies. Since antiquity, no disturbance could match the harshness of this one.

230 Cf. SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi," quotations from Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi*; *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi;" *Baizheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu."

231 The map was engraved by Lü Ting 呂梃 and two other local cartographers, Zhang Yuncheng 張允成 and Zhang Yundi 張允迪, probably on the instructions of the prefect Li Shoupeng 李壽朋 who at the time conducted a series of construction works in the city and promoted the publishing of the *Wujun Zhi*. (Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, "Xu" by Zhao Rutan 趙汝談; SPCK, "Yuanxu") The construction works carried out in the period between 1224 and 1229 are also reflected on the picture map. After his scrupulous examination and comparison of contemporary documents and the map, Wang Jian 王謇 concludes that the official establishments and temples built by the end of the summer of 1229 are all shown on the map, while those built thereafter are not. (SPCK, "Yuanxu") For a discussion of the content of this map, see Wang 1990:50-5.

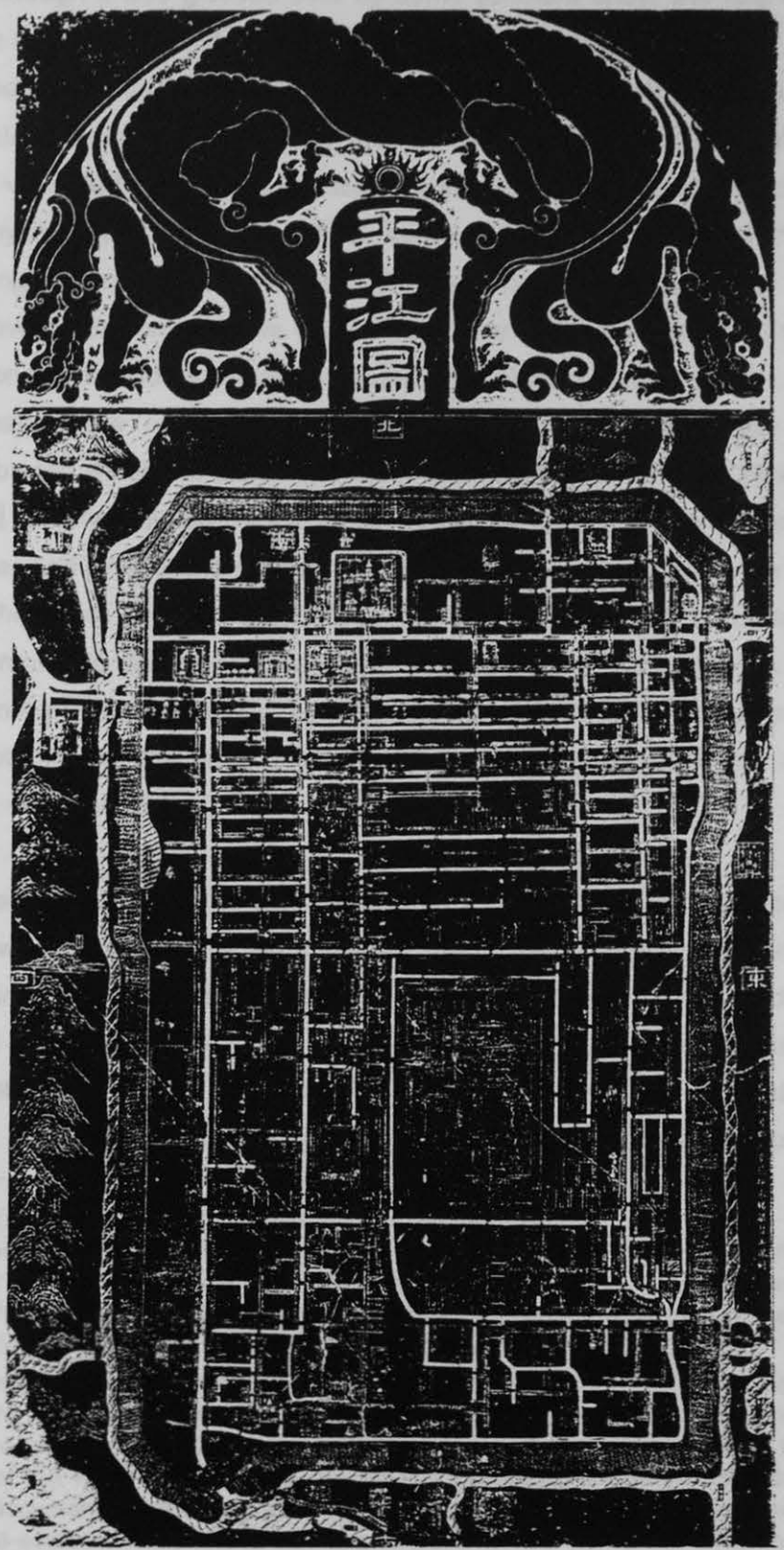

Figure 4-2 A rubbing of the picture map of the city of Suzhou carved on stone in 1229. (Cao and Wu 1986:66) This stele is preserved in the former prefectural school attached to the Confucian Temple in the lower left, south-west, quarter of the city.

them, even though it was glossed over by some scholars under the rule of the Yuan as a gesture of confidence.[232] We do not really know how thoroughly the walls of the city of Suzhou were dismantled at that time, except in the words of Lu Xiong that "many people resided scatteredly on the remains of the walls, and although five [city] gates were left standing, [the walls] were levelled[233] and [the city] did not have any physical defence work." (SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi," quotations from Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi*) This situation however did not last long, as in 1352 the Yuan government ordered the rebuilding of city walls in all parts of the country to guard Mongol defenders against Chinese Red Scarf (*hongjin* 紅巾) rebels.[234] Suzhou's walls were rebuilt in the following year. The construction work was carried out by ten thousand labourers under the supervision of the Chinese prefect Gao Lü 高履 and two Mongol supervisors, and they also dredged the moats which became wider and deeper than before. (Cf. SPCK, op.cit. quotations from Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi*; *Gusu Zhi*, op.cit. with PXJJ) At the completion of the construction of the walls, temples to certain specific gods were built on top of all the six city gates. This act is interpreted by Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 as a thankful reply to the gods' gracious protection of the labourers from the harsh heat and at times unbearable rains of the summer. (PXJJ)

It is clearly to be seen by now that before the Ming, large scale reconstruction of the walls was usually conducted in the second half of, or even at the end of, each dynastic period. It was only from the Ming on that such work was carried out in the early period of the dynasty. This phenomenon appears to be in line with the realisation that the early Ming dynasty was the great age of Chinese wall building.[235] It may be seen as indicating an ever increased symbolic role that the

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232 Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 of the Yuan, for example, writes:

> Emperor Shizhu united all under Heaven. [He] took the land between the Four Seas as his abode, and the six domains (*liuhe* 六合, i.e., Heaven, Earth and the Four Quarters) as his palaces. [Therefore he] did not set up defence at those trifling city walls. (PXJJ)

233 The character *dang* 蕩 reads a little ambiguously here, as two of its meanings are relevant in the context. It denotes "level" and accordingly modifies the omitted word "walls;" it also denotes "damaged" or "destroyed" and thus modifies either the omitted word "walls" or the word "gates" in the preceding sentence. Since in the following passage of the same document there appears the phrase "built the walls and dredged the moats" to refer to the re-establishment of the city defence, I find that the former meaning of *dang*, i.e., "level," is more to be favoured.

234 Cf. *Yuan Shi*, vol. 42: "Benji," no. 42: "Shundi," no. 5; *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi."

235 Cf. Liu 1987:8, Mote 1977:137, TDCGJ 1982:68 and Chen 1983:71. This was evidenced in the numerous records about wall building in the imperial capitals, in regional and local capital cities, in military forts on the frontiers, and more conspicuously, in the

city walls played in society from the early Ming onwards, because, in terms of national and regional defence, there is no reason to believe that the military strength of the Ming and Qing empires was lesser in their early years than that of their predecessors. It is not surprising that the rebuilt city walls of Suzhou in the second half of the fourteenth century, as perceived by Lu Xiong and Wang Ao 王鏊, in "their height, width, solidity and accuracy surpassed all their precedents." (See, e.g., *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") After the Qing consolidated their control over the South-east, the city of Suzhou was promoted to the provincial capital of Jiangsu, and in 1662, the provincial governor Han Shiqi 韓世琦 directed the last whole-scale reconstruction of the walls in the history of Suzhou.[236] From then on, partial repairs continued until the end of the Qing, and walls were left neglected thereafter, and later gave way to the development of modern roads and other establishments.

From all the records of these reconstructions of the city walls, we know almost nothing of the actual process of building. In a few cases, we are told of the amounts and the sources of money spent on the projects, or of the total number of labourers summoned to the construction works, or, slightly more frequently, the names of the scholar-officials who initiated and supervised them. Yet it seems to be a typical situation in the history of Chinese city building that neither descriptions of the building work nor technical reports on plans, engineering, materials, or other features are available to us. Is it because architectural skills were not associated with the literati but with the artisans who kept alive what Wright (1977:73) calls "a profoundly conservative architectural tradition" by transmitting these skills and arts through apprenticeship? Or is it because the building process and technical details were long considered part of a fixed convention, and there was thus no incentive for the intellectuals to document them? In any event, it is most probably true, as Mote (1977:133) asserts when facing a similar problem in discussing the construction of the city walls of Nanjing in the early Ming, that these details did not command the interest of the Chinese responsible for creating the historical record.

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work on the Great Wall.

236 Cf. *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20: "Yudi Zhi": "Chengchi": "Suzhoufu;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi."

4.3 LENGTH AND POSITION OF THE CITY WALLS

Determination of the physical form of the city in a given period basically requires two pieces of information, namely the accurate length and position of its walls at that time. Because of the lack of archaeological findings, our principal sources for these two features are literary and pictorial records. I have demonstrated in the preceding section that there were at least five occasions on which large-scale reconstruction of the city walls took place from the late ninth century onwards. Records of their measurements in successive dynastic periods, as far as they are presently available, vary significantly. This variation at first sight suggests that the length and position of the walls altered in the last millennium of the imperial era. Consequently, apart probably from those in the Qing period, they cannot directly be inferred with any certainty from the morphology of the present city, unless these records are closely examined in collation with the contemporary city maps. Such an examination is made difficult not only by the unavailability of either kind of source materials for a few different historical periods, but also by the ambiguity and inconsistency in some of the records accounting for the city of the same period.[237] Yet this problem has to be tackled as vigorously as possible so as to provide a more satisfactory comprehensiveness in the study of the development of the urban form of the city of Suzhou.

One may have noticed from Table 4-1 that no further records of the length of the walls recur in historic documents until the end of the Tang. In the *Wudi Ji* the size of the wall-enclosed area after Zhang Tuan's reconstruction of the city in A.D. 876 is recorded as twelve *li* (approx. 6.048km at the Tang standard) long from north to south, and nine *li* (approx. 4.536km) long from east to west, which would roughly amount to forty-two *li* or about 21km in perimeter, if (1) the general shape of the city is taken as close to a rectangular, the same text indicating that "the city was in the form of the character *ya* 亞," and (2) the irregularity of some sections of the walls disregarded. Indeed, elsewhere in most editions of the *Wudi Ji*, the city is recorded to have had a wall of forty-two *li* thirty *bu* (approx. 21.168km) in perimeter (*zhou* 周).[238] Approximate as it is, this figure is

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237 To my knowledge, this problem has not been considered by Western students of Suzhou's history, nor for whatever reasons seriously dealt with by modern Chinese scholars. Cao and Wu, (1986:50, 69, 77 and 80) for example, evade this difficulty not only by simply repeating the figures stated in some of the ancient documents without any critical analysis of their contradictory aspects, but also by making some groundless assertions about the scale of the city.

238 One exception can be found in the edition contained in the encyclopaedia *Xuejin*

considerably larger than the perimeter of the city presently encircled by the city moats, which is around 15km; and it is not certain how truly it accounts for the real length of the city walls in the Tang period, because all the Tang establishments are only loosely depicted in the documents of that time and we thus have no information about the precise position of the walls.

The encyclopaedia *Taiping Huanyu Ji*, (vol. 91: "Jiangnan Dongdao," no. 3: "Suzhou") records that the perimeter of the city enclosed by walls was thirty *li* (approx. 16.686km at the Song standard) at the time of the completion of the document between A.D. 978 and 983. Obviously, this figure again is a round number. Since there are no other records of wall building between A.D. 876 and 1223, only some of the strengthening of the walls with brick and stone facing in A.D. 922 and the partial repair of them in or around the 1180s, it seems plausible to suggest that both the *Wudi Ji* and the *Taiping Huanyu Ji* basically refer to the same walls. The question is, which is closer to their actual measurements? This question may tentatively be answered by looking at other physical features of the city, especially the network of its canals. The whole system of water courses in and around the city presented on the 1229 map (Figure 4-3), as we will see later in this section and in Chapter Five, is also identically depicted on the maps produced in subsequent history. Creating such a system demands enormous funds and extensive work, and it is most likely that it was accomplished by stages starting well before the Tang period. Hence, although the construction work in 1223 seems to have been conducted more thoroughly according to the historic records, the position of the walls may not have altered significantly at that time, as there is no reason to assume that the entire water system which physically determined the form of the city in general was a new one created in that year. Moreover, since the position of the walls, the moats and the overall form of the city shown on the 1229 map, which may be regarded as genuinely reflecting the features of the city right after the 1223 construction, are almost identical to those of later times, it is very possible that the moderate figure in the *Taiping Huanyu Ji*, which comes closer to the perimeter of the present city defined by the existing moats, is more accurate than that estimated from the information given in the *Wudi Ji*. In that case, the total length of the walls from A.D. 876 on would have been less than seventeen kilometres.

Taoyuan 學津討原 compiled by Zhang Haipeng 張海鵬 (1755-1816), where it is recorded as forty-five *li* thirty *bu*.

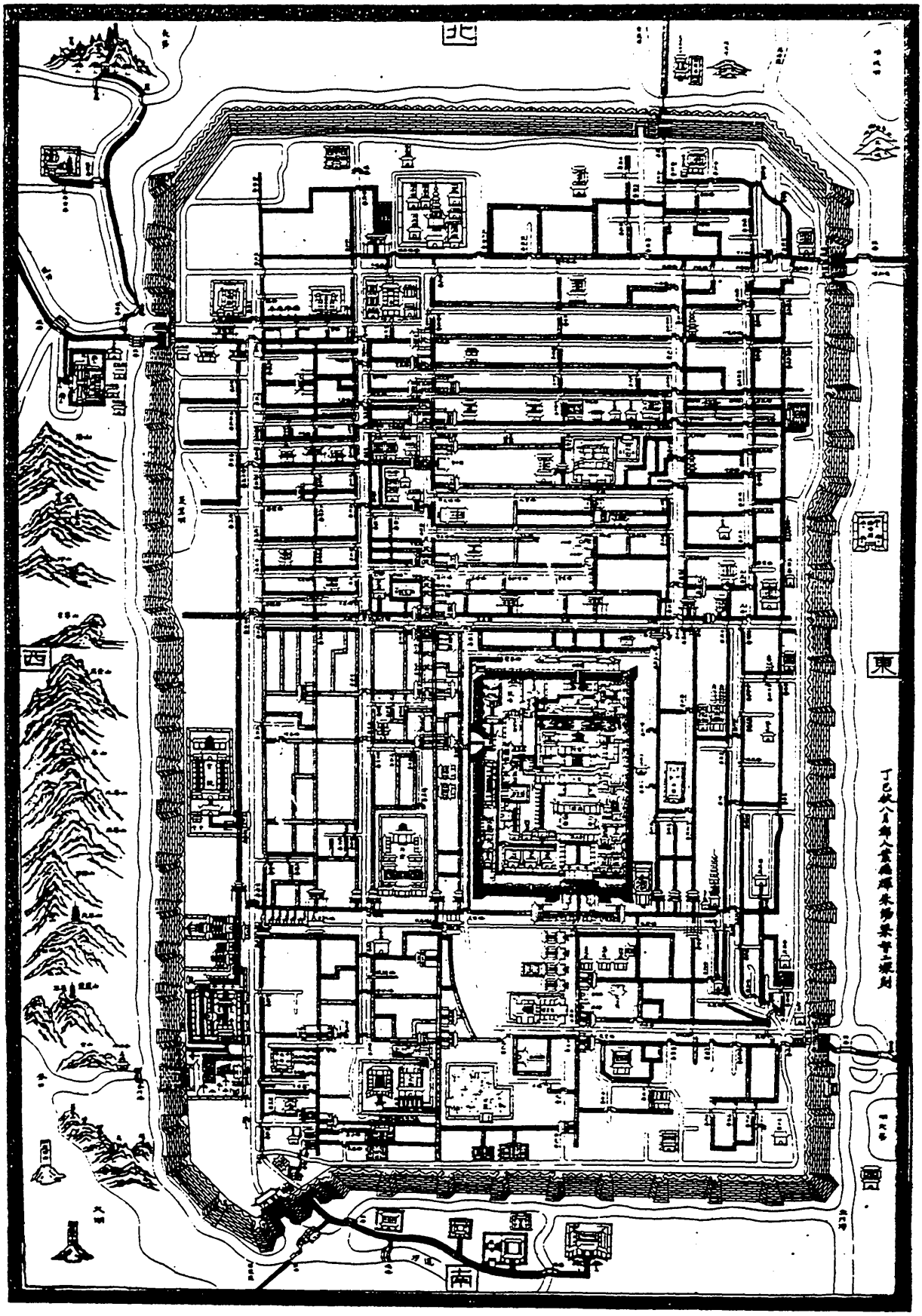

Figure 4-3 Picture map of the city of Suzhou adapted from a rubbing of the 1229 map. Adapted from JYCGBW 1988:348.

The perimeter of the walls in the wake of the reconstruction under the Yuan in A.D. 1352 may not have been recorded,[239] but Zheng Yuanyou, a contemporary local scholar, writes in his memoir *Pingjianglu Xinzhu Juncheng Ji* (PXJJ): "The four sides of the city walls were oriented like the ones initiated by [Wu] Zixu, and the water gates followed the old ones functioning in the Song except that Xu Gate [blocked during the Song period] was reopened." This passage not only suggests that the form of the city largely remained the same as its predecessor, but also implies that the perimeter of the walls was kept similar to that in the Southern Song.

Very detailed measurements of the walls in the early Ming are given in Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi* (quotations in SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi") and Wang Ao's *Gusu Zhi* (vol. 16: "Chengchi"). Yet, not untypically, three figures which are in considerable discord with each other appear together in the latter, and two in the former. Taking the *Gusu Zhi* (ibid.) for example, the first figure[240] is really a repetition of the integers recorded in the *Wudi Ji*: twelve *li* from north to south and nine *li* from east to west, which would amount to 21.168km in perimeter at the Tang standard, as we have discussed earlier, or 24.192km in perimeter at the Ming standard. We may disregard this account at this moment, since the incorporation of it in the text is more likely to emphasise the continuity of the development of the city form at least from the late Tang onward, than to record the actual measurement of the circumference of the walled enclosure, which may have been much smaller than it claims.

The second tells us that "the *zhou* 周 (lit. 'perimeter')[241] [of the walled city] is 34 *li* 53 *bu* 9 *fen*, . . . that is, 12,293 *bu* 9 *fen*;"[242] its modern equivalent would thus be about 19.669km as the traditional unit *chi* is converted at the Ming standard. This is certainly a new account. Its liability is perhaps very open to

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239 Cao and Wu (1986:69) claim that the perimeter of the walls at this time was forty-five *li*, without giving any source of reference. Yet the description of other details of the event in their work indicates that they have relied on the sources no more than I do, and according to the versions of these documents available to me, no mentions of the perimeter of the walls are found at all. Mote (1962:43) asserts: "The new wall built in the late Yuan period was forty-seven *li*, or about sixteen miles in circumference." Likewise, no source of reference is provided.

240 The priority of this set of figures here is not in accordance with the order of its appearance in the original text in question, but simply for the convenience of the present discussion.

241 We assume for the moment that the character *zhou* denotes perimeter, and will later return to this possibly questionable assumption.

242 1 *li* = 360 *bu*, as 1 *bu* = 5 *chi*.

question. The *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu* written in the mid-seventeenth century by Zhang Guowei 張國維 of the late Ming contains a detailed picture map of the city of Suzhou entitled "Suzhoufu Chengnei Shuidao Tu" (a map of the water courses within the city of Suzhou Prefecture) and showing conditions of his time. It is drawn in four pieces, as Figure 4-4 displays, all together presenting the walled enclosure in a square rather than oblong form. This does not mean that the shape of the city at this time was a square, but that it is a misshapen presentation probably because attention is paid mainly to the courses of rivers and canals of the city. In fact, the same volume also contains another city map drawn in one piece, aimed at presenting the general form of the city, which clearly indicates that the shape of the city was similar to that of it in the Southern Song. (See Figure 4-5) By comparing the detailed information about the city gates, bridges, temples and other city establishments with relation to the courses of waters contained in these two maps and the 1229 picture map (see Figure 4-3), we understand that the position of the walls during the Ming period was basically the same as that in the Southern Song, and thus that the second account of the measurement of the walls in the *Gusu Zhi* is still an over-statement if it really meant the perimeter of the walled enclosure.

The third figure is far more comprehensive than the preceding two, in that the distance all around the walls was measured by particularising the wall-space in between all the gates.[243] The total length (*chang* 長) of the walls should therefore be 14.344km, and this figure possibly did not include the length accounting for the extra measurement of the six city gates. Fortunately, the reliability of this figure and the preceding one can be tested by the record of the lengths of the canals within the city walls, which is provided in the *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu* (vol. 7: "Hexing": "Suzhoufu"). The record contains measurements of the distance between every two adjacent bridges; and as these segments along the main north-south and east-west canals are added up, it suggests that this last account of the length of the city walls should be regarded as closest to the actual one during the Ming period. In fact, by checking the recorded measurements of the distances along the walls between the gates against those shown on the map of the present-day city, we find that they are remarkably accurate. Thus it is also very likely that this figure is the most faithful

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243 The length of the wall between Chang Gate and Xu Gate is recorded as 639 *zhang* 5 *chi*; that between Xu Gate and Pan Gate as 388 *zhang* 7 *chi*; that between Pan Gate and Feng Gate as 1,118 *zhang*; that between Feng Gate and Lou Gate as 864 *zhang* 2 *chi*; that between Lou Gate and Qi Gate as 580 *zhang*; and that between Qi Gate and Pan Gate as 892 *zhang* 2 *chi* 5 *cun*. Thus the sum total is 4,482 *zhang* 6 *chi* 5 *cun*. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16)

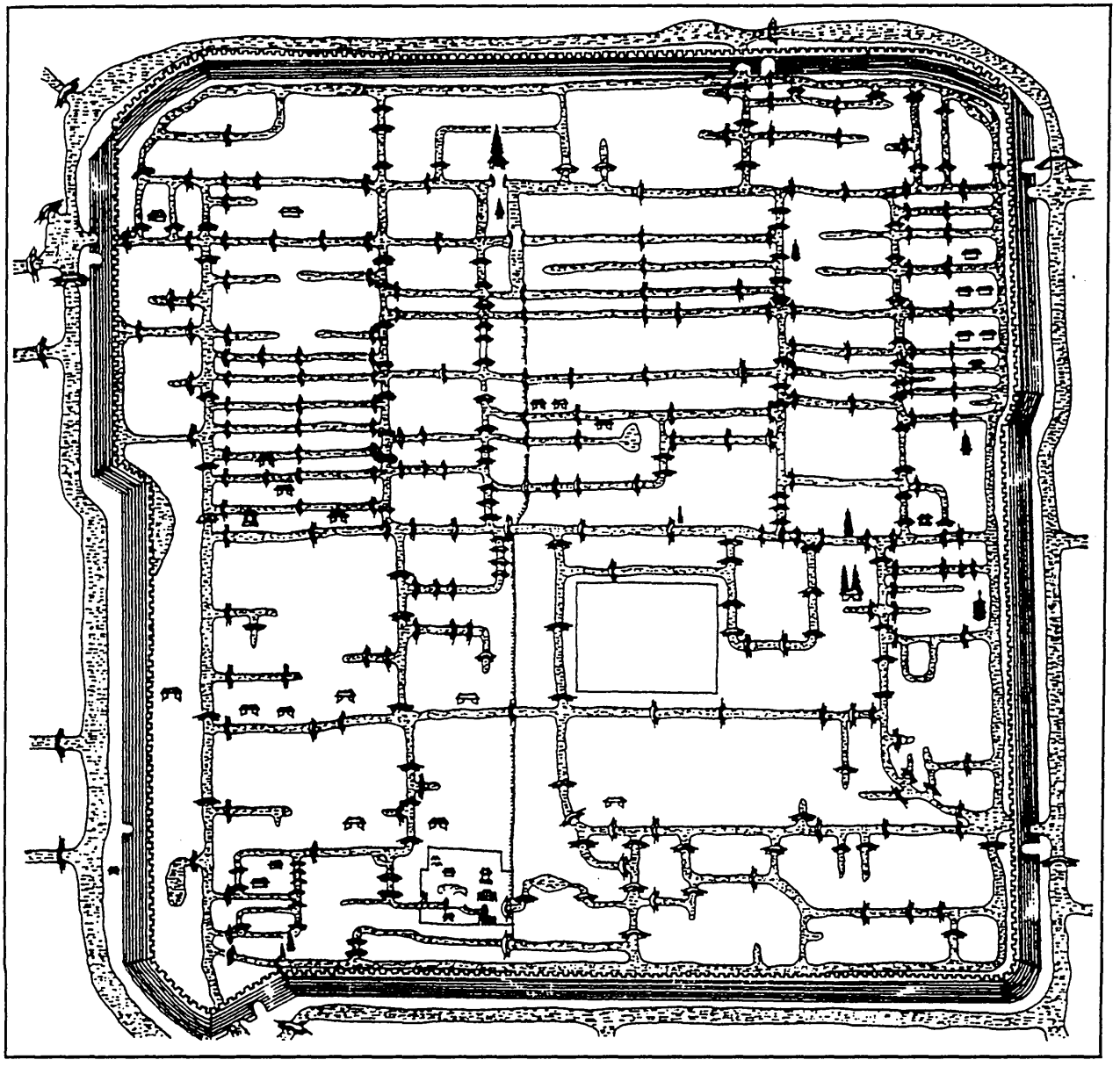

Figure 4-4 Picture map of the water courses within the city of Suzhou at the end of the Ming in the mid-seventeenth century. Redrawn from *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*: "Tu."

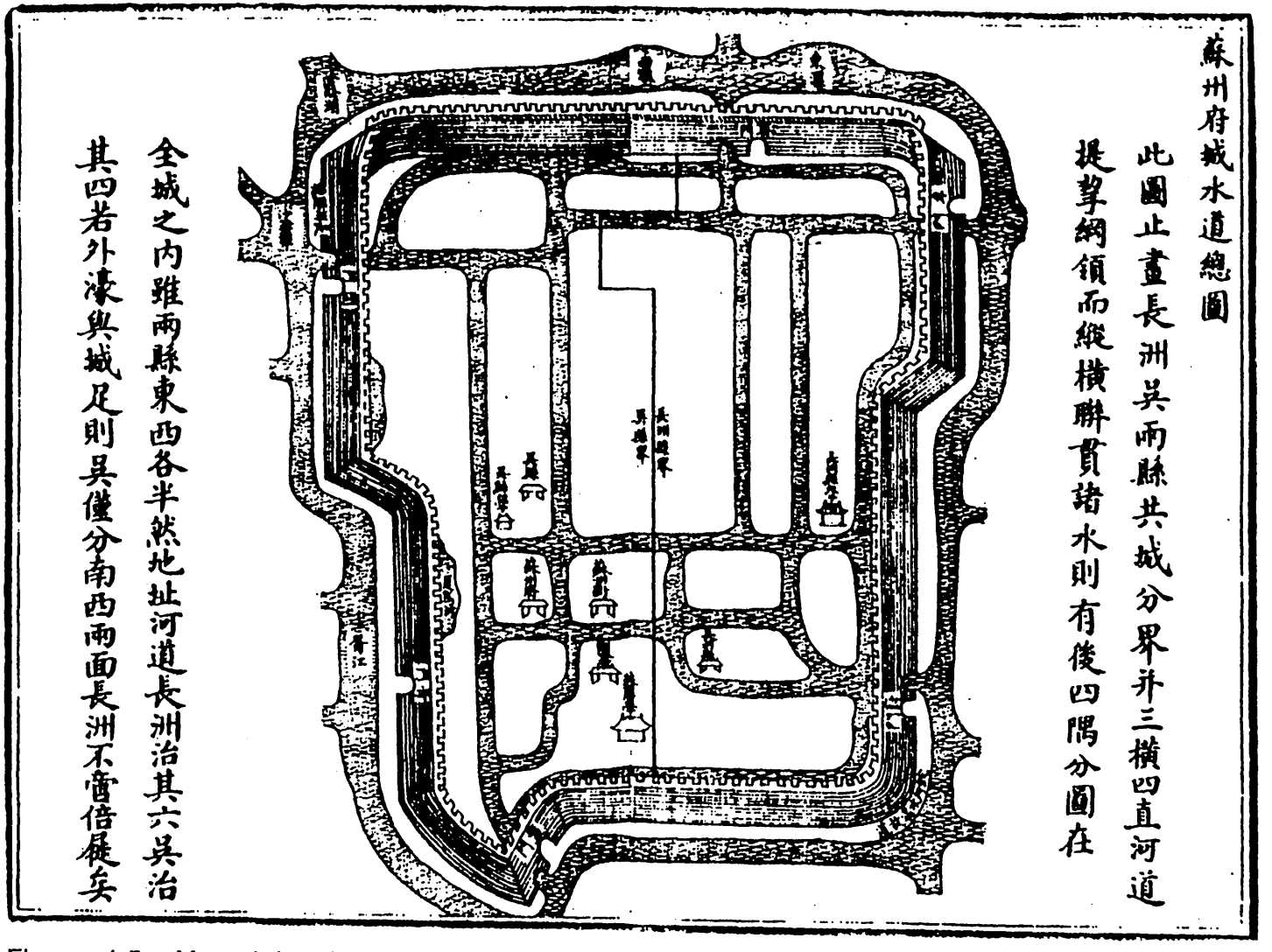

Figure 4-5 Map of the city of Suzhou in its overall form, presented in the *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*: "Tu."

one amongst all the others in pre-modern times.[244]

A similar discrepancy is found in the accounts of the length of the walls after their rebuilding in the early Qing in 1662. The *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, (vol. 20: "Yudi Zhi": "Chengchi": "Suzhoufu") for example, speaks of two figures: "the *zhou* (lit. 'perimeter') of the present city walls is forty-five *li* (25.110km at the Qing standard), and its *chang* (lit. 'length'), five thousand six hundred and five *zhang* 丈 (17.376km)." A comparison amongst the city maps of the Southern Song, the Ming, and the mid and late Qing again indicates that the position of the walls remained without significant change, except that the south-east corner might have bulged a little, and that the walls appear to have been more tortuous in the Qing; moreover, since no further large scale reconstruction works on the walls are recorded from 1662 onward, there is hardly any reason to doubt that the city maps of the mid and late Qing closely represent the approximate position of the walls in the early Qing. Thus the first account cited above, which reads about ten kilometres larger than the actual length of the walls, again appears to have been an exaggeration. The second account given by the *Jiangnan Tongzhi* seems more reasonable, although it is still about three kilometres larger than the perimeter of the wall-enclosed city during the Ming period. Two possible factors causing this discrepancy may be suggested: (1) it was the result of measuring errors by the Qing surveyors, and (2) the walls really were a little longer during the Qing period, as the south-east section might have been stretched further outward, and some other sections elsewhere might have featured as more sinuous.

However, the juxtaposition of two incongruous figures presumably indicating the same thing in the same passage of the Ming texts in question, and the recurrence

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244 About half a century after the compilation of Wang Ao's *Gusu Zhi* in 1506, Zheng Ruozeng 鄭若曾 (fl. 1505-1580) echoes in his *Jiangnan Jinglüe* 江南經略 (vol. 2A: "Suzhoufu Chengchi Kao") Wang Ao's statement that "the perimeter [of the walled city] is 12,293 *bu* 9 *fen*," but adds that "in total, it is forty-five *li*" and that the section belonging to Wu county is twenty-two *li* and the section belonging to Changzhou county is twenty-three *li*. These figures added by Zheng Ruozeng must be disregarded, not only because they represent a measurement that is far out of proportion to the possible actual size of the area enclosed by the city walls, but, unlike Wang Ao's account, they are entirely inconsistent with the figure using the length unit *bu*, which Zheng possibly adopted from the *Gusu Zhi*. Roughly during the same period of time, Cao Zishou 曹自守, the magistrate of Wu county in 1559, wrote a short discourse entitled *Wuxian Chengtu Shuo* 吳縣城圖説 concerning the city walls of Suzhou. Although Cao claims, as does Zheng Ruozeng, that the wall was forty-five *li* in circumference, he also indicates that the city measured five *li* (approx. 2.88km) wide from east to west and seven *li* (approx. 4.032km) long from north to south. This comes very close indeed to the third figure presented in the *Gusu Zhi*, and thus probably to the actual measurements of the length of the city walls as well.

of a similar pattern of accounts in the Qing documents, induce one to consider that there might have been some particular reasons for these seemingly peculiar accounts of the walls by the Ming and Qing scholars. It would seem a plausible suggestion that this incongruity was caused by the application of different methods of measuring. Liu Jinzao 劉錦藻 has pointed out in his *Qing Xu Wenxian Tongkao* 清續文獻通考 written in 1921 that the use of *chi* was usually preferable when shorter and more delicate objects were measured, while *li* (usually combined with *bu*) was often applied in the measurement of longer distances, notably road distances. (Liang 1988:527) This indicates that the co-existence of two sets of mutually convertible length units may at times have been used with different techniques of measuring a distance. One set with the units *zhang*, *chi* and *cun* may often have been employed to measurement with a ruler, and the other set with the units *bu* (lit. "pace") and *wu*[245] to measurement with counting by steps. Thus, a considerable disparity could have been produced between the result of pacing off the lengths of the city walls and that of measuring them with a ruler. Yet if so, why do the authors of these Ming and Qing documents not comment at all on these obvious disparities?

Still another possible explanation of these confusing accounts is that we may cast some doubt on our previous presumption that the character *zhou* exclusively denotes "perimeter" in these Ming and Qing documents. Two words that are frequently used for the description of the extent of a walled city are *chang* 長 and *zhou* 周. In measurements, *chang* denotes "length" and *zhou* usually means "perimeter" or "circumference." However, since the latter also has the meanings of "all around" and "dense," one may find some grounds to doubt whether its denotation is as exclusive as that of the former. We should also note that many of the length units used in ancient documents occasionally denote "area" as well, i.e., "surface measure." Since most walled cities in North China Plain appear to have been closely in square form, their size may sometimes be described with the character *fang* 方 (lit. "square" in its both senses of "surface measure" and "square shape");[246]

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245 1 *bu* = 0.5 *wu*. There is little doubt that these units, though convertible in any certain period of time and sometimes used in mixture, are more compatible with each other within their own set than with those of the other set. This pattern is visible not only in the frequency of its practical use, but also in many idiomatic phrases, as we read, for example in the *Guo Yu* (vol. 3: "Zhou Yu," no. C): "[The capacity of] the eye to measure by observing does not exceed the scope of *buwu* and *chicun*."

246 See, e.g., *Yandu Congkao*, vol. 1: chap. 2: "Chengchi" for the accounts of the walls of the dynastic capital cities at Beijing, collected from various historical documents. It should be noted however that the use of *fang* in the account of the size of the city appears in most cases to have been in the manner that the figures following the character are the

while the application of this character to the measurement of the cities in the South would be inaccurate and confusing, because many of them were in rectangular, circular or, even more often, irregular forms. It is therefore not totally impossible that the character *zhou*, as a substitute for *fang*, was used to indicate the "area" of the wall-enclosed cities in the South, rather than their "perimeter." This hypothesis gains a little more support from the textual logic: since city walls in China almost invariably formed continuous enclosure, the measurement of their "length" was basically equivalent to that of their "perimeter." Thus there was no need simply to juxtapose two sets of figures which meant the same feature, whereas by giving the area of the walled enclosure along with the length of the walls, descriptions of the city form became more informative.[247] This last explanation, however, is still no more than a hypothesis, because in literature not only is it rare that the character *zhou* is used to denote "area" but is also used in the simultaneous

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length of each side of the square, as the "Kaogong Ji" section of the *Zhou Li* describes the canonical royal Zhou city as "a square with sides of nine *li* (*fang jiu li* 方九里)." The territorial area of the Central Kingdom was also accounted for with the character *fang*, as was sometimes that of other states and regions. Practically, this was a method of "cutting off from the long to supplement the short (*jiechang buduan* 截長補短);" conceptually, it was in line with the notion that since the earth was square, so should regulated territories also be.

247 This hypothesis is proposed by Xu Jialu, professor in the exegesis of ancient Chinese texts (*xungu* 訓詁), through personal communication in 1995. Basing ourselves on this hypothesis, we may examine the measurements of the city walls of Suzhou recorded in the Ming documents. Let us again take the statement in the *Gusu Zhi* (vol. 16: "Chengchi"), for example: "the *zhou* [of the walled city] was 34 *li* 53 *bu* 9 *fen*, that is, 12,293 *bu* 9 *fen*," and "the total [length of the wall] is 4,482 *zhang* 6 *chi* 5 *cun*." Taking the character *zhou* as indicating area measurement of the city in a close rectangular shape, we may assume that the length of the city's short side, i.e., east-west side, was around five *li* (approx. 2.88km at the Ming standard) and that of its long side, i.e., north-south side was around seven *li* (approx. 4.032km); both are fairly close to the dimensions of the present area encircled by the remains of the city moats. Their multiple standing for the area of the city is approximately thirty-five square *li* which is roughly in accord with the figure in the *Gusu Zhi* for the *zhou* of the walled city; while the sum of their doubles, twenty-four *li*, is equivalent to about 4,220 *zhang* or 42,200 *chi* as 1 *li* = 180 *zhang* and 1 *zhang* = 10 *chi*, which is also close to, although about 2,000 *chi* (approx. 0.6km) smaller than, the other figure given by the *Gusu Zhi* for the total length of the walls. The difference of this 2,000 *chi* seems explainable: it probably accounts for the length of the walls which formed the counterscarps outside the six city gates. As the same hypothetical method is applied in the Qing measurements, we obtain a similarly proportional result between the figure presumably representing the area of the walled enclosure and the figure representing the length of the walls. They roughly correspond to each other when the measurements are converted either way, except that there exists a larger difference (about 7,000 *chi* [approx. 2.17km]) between the recorded length of the walls and the length estimated by reference to the presumably recorded area. Is it possible that this difference comes not only from the inclusion of both the length of the wall sections which functioned as semi-circular or square counterscarps outside those six city gates (*yuecheng* 月城), but also from the extra measurements possibly brought about by the meandering of the walls in the Qing?

presentation of an account of the area of the walled enclosure and the length of the walls, even though this would sound very logical in our time. These discrepancies are difficult to explain satisfactorily, and the matter must be considered unresolved.[248]

Although the inconsistency in the records of the measurements of the city walls remains puzzling for the time being, two major conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of evidence that I have produced so far: (1) at least from the late Tang onward, the length of the walls continuously fell within the range between 25 *li* and 30 *li*, that is, between approximately 15km and 17km; and (2) the approximate position of the walls and the basic form of the city that they defined remained unchanged from 1229, or even from the second half of the ninth century, if not still earlier. These two concluding statements are verified largely by a comparison among the city maps of the Southern Song, Ming, Qing and modern periods, with reference to written records of the construction of the city walls. In Figures 4-6 - 4-9, I display four representative city maps produced from 1748 onwards so that the reader may collate them with those of the Southern Song (Figure 4-3) and the Ming (Figure 4-4). These maps show that images of many constructions such as city gates, bridges, temples, etc., which bear the same names (occasionally homophones - a result of linguistic change in time) and by which the position of the city walls can be judged, are placed in identical locations in every historic period. This evidence, perhaps insufficient, as it sometimes appears,[249] is reinforced by two facts which are more convincing: that, allowing some minor differences in sinuosity, the overall shape of the city presented on all the maps is characteristically similar, with almost every turn of the walls meticulously indicated; and, more importantly, that the courses of waters and the points of their confluences both within the walled city and outside are identical. Indeed, since any water control project would have proved to be costly, it is very unlikely that the

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248 Confronting a similar problem when considering the length of the city wall of Nanjing, Mote (1977:134-6) has noted that the historical records and even the modern descriptions all differ on this point, although as the wall stands today it is essentially the fourteenth-century wall built by the Ming founder in the second half of the fourteenth century, and that the problem of this kind of discrepancies in records "tends to leave some doubt about all traditional measurements, even when corroborated in very recent studies."

249 One may be fastidious and cast some doubt on this evidence by insisting that, since many of these artefacts were in fact reconstructed time and again, with their original names persistently applied to them, their recurrence on these maps in the same positional relationship with the city walls and gates does not necessarily mean that they were rebuilt on the exact locations of their predecessors.

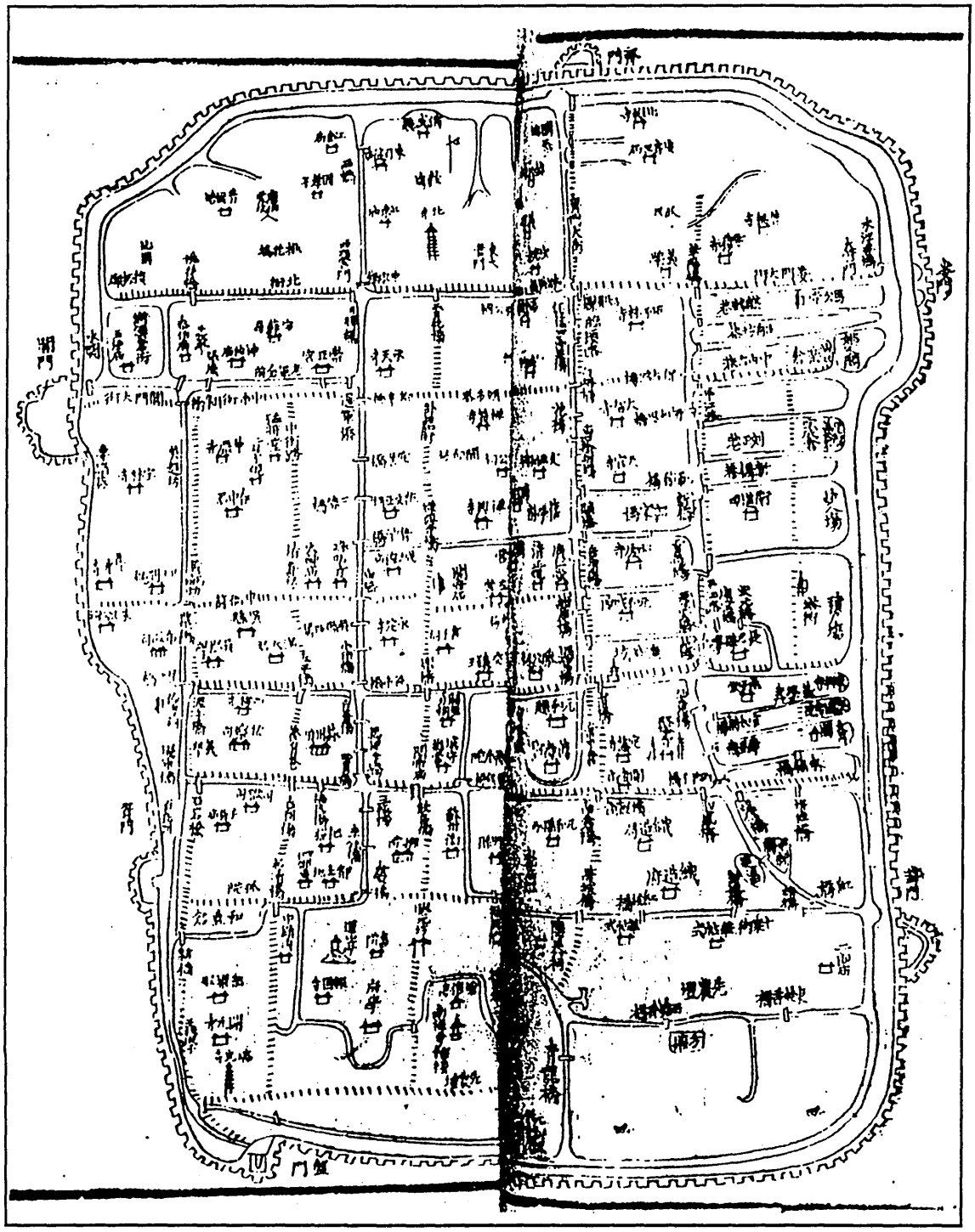

Figure 4-6 Map of the city of Suzhou in 1748, contained in the 1748 *Suzhoufu Zhi*. (LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986 [page not numbered])

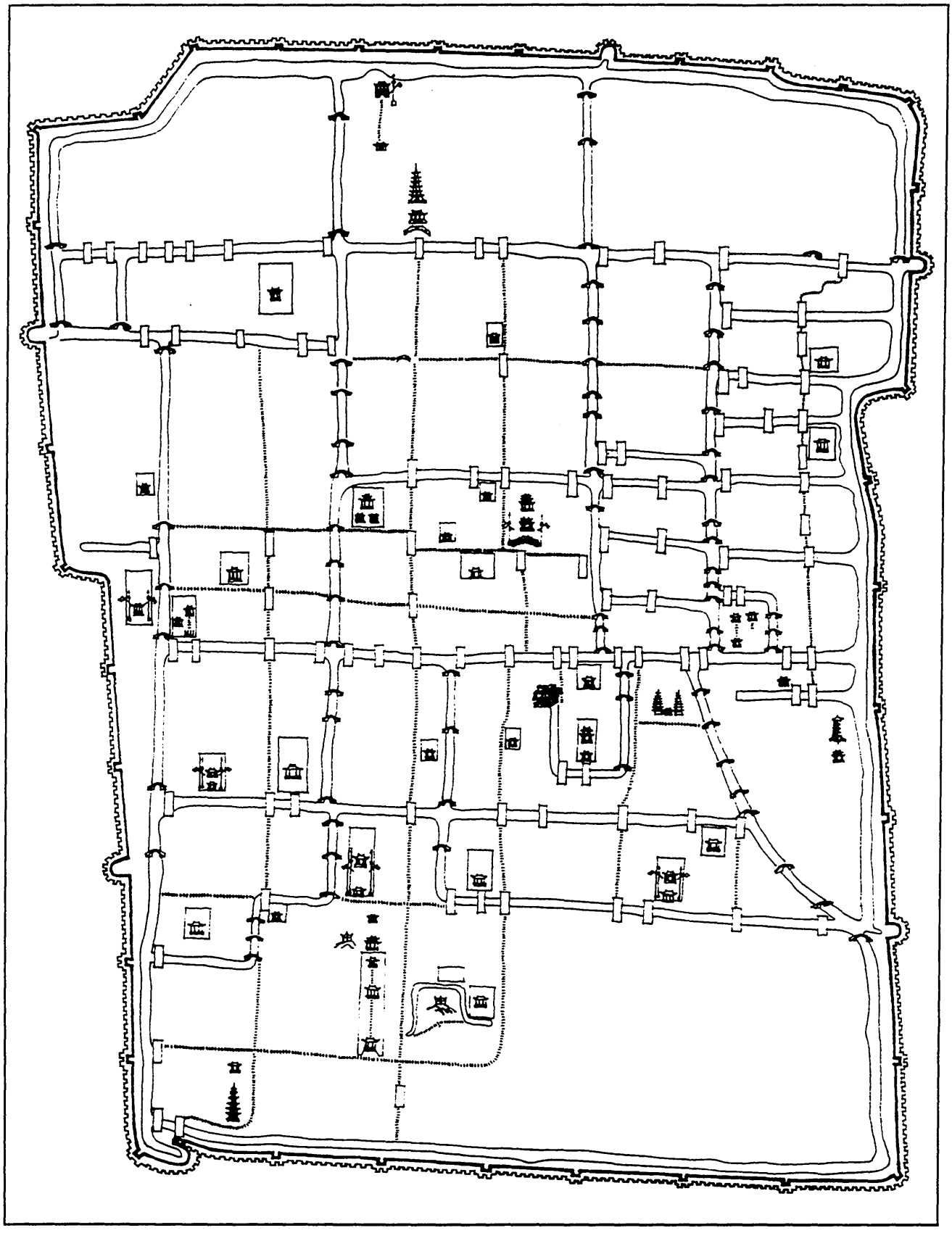

Figure 4-7 Picture map of the city of Suzhou in 1797, adapted from the map carved on stone in 1797. The stele is preserved in the old Temple of the City Walls and Moats (Chenghuang Miao) in the central left, west, quarter of the city.

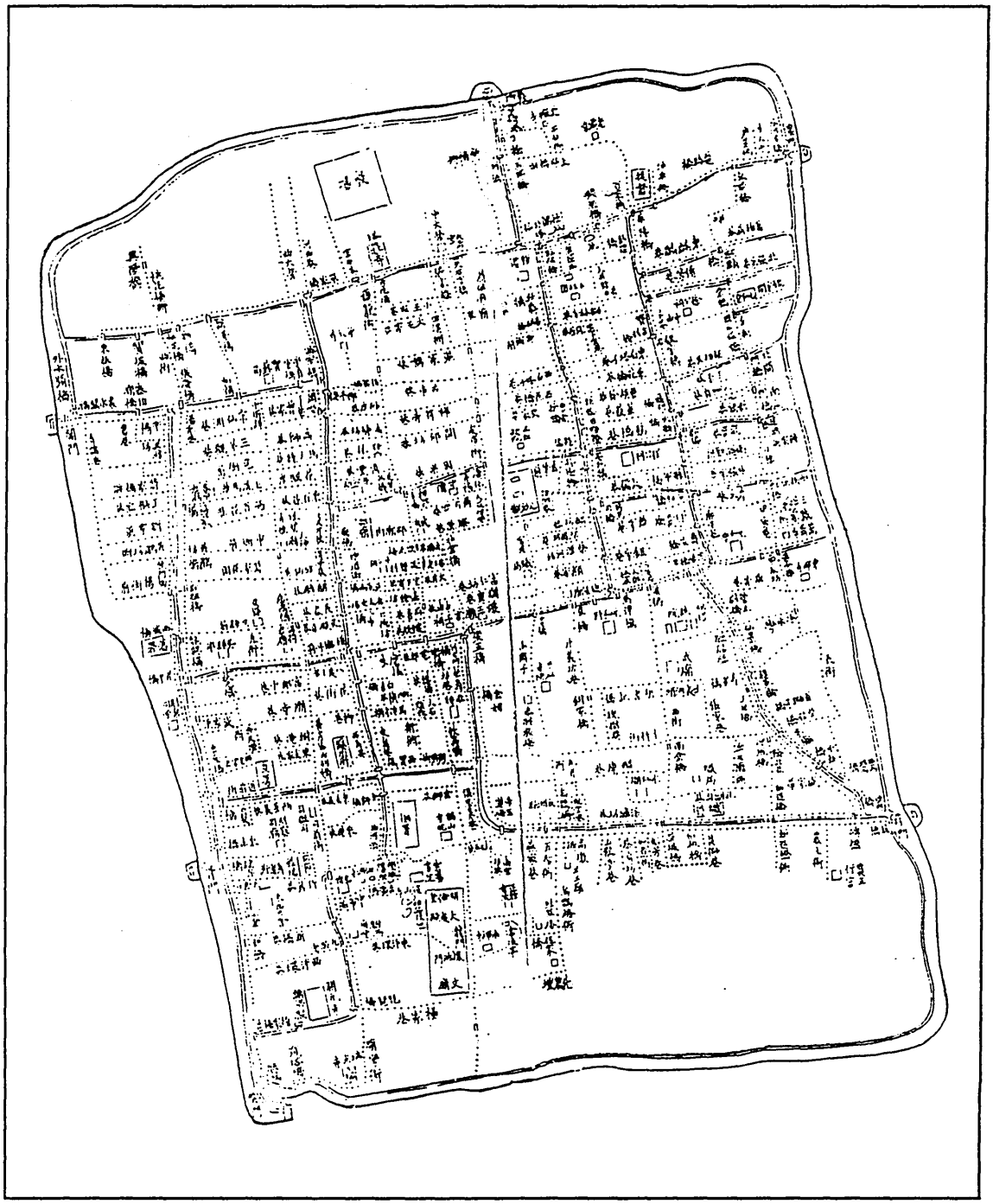

Figure 4-8 Map of the city of Suzhou in 1883. Adapted from *Suzhoufu Zhi*: "Sucheng Quantu."

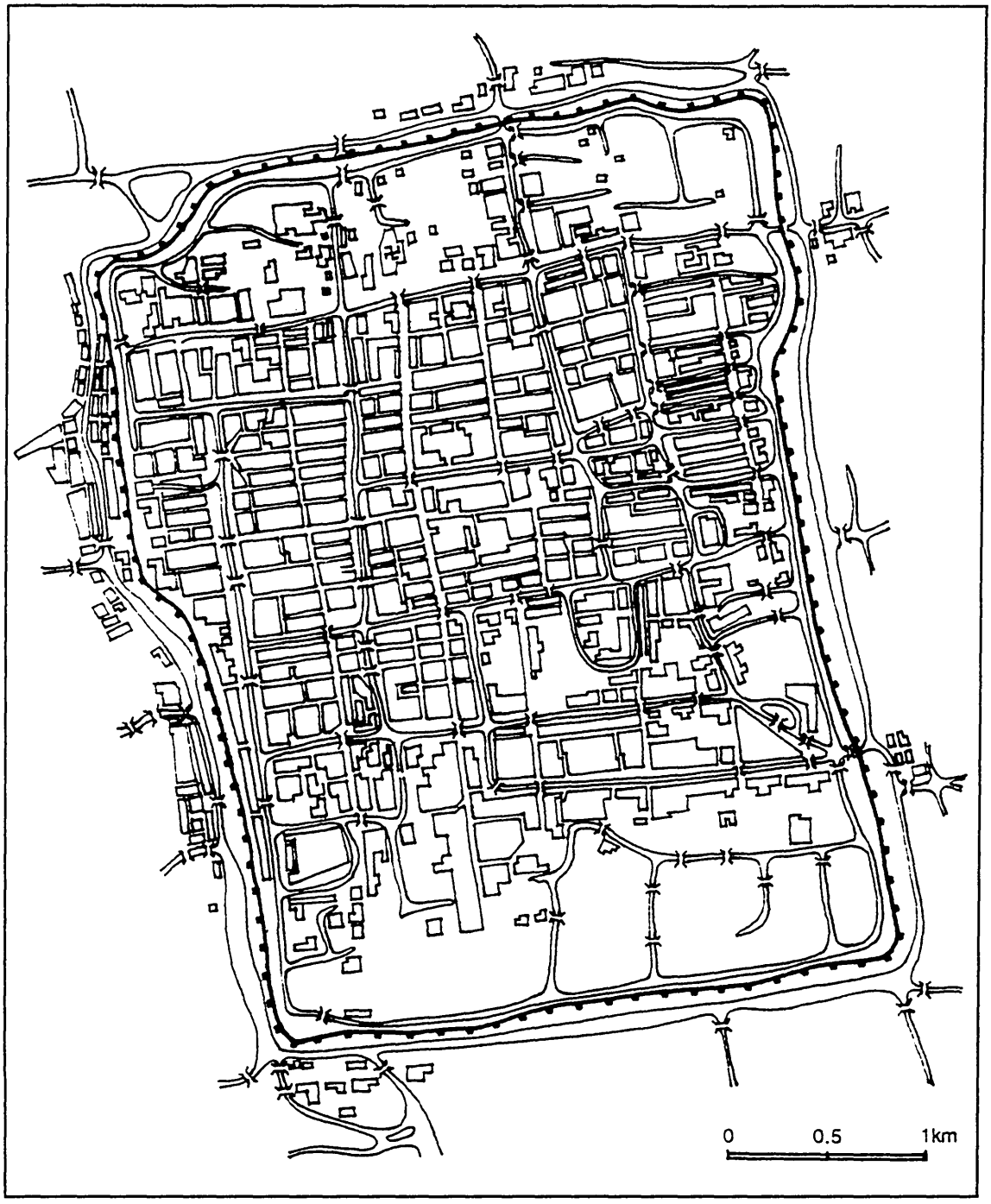

Figure 4-9 Map of the city of Suzhou redrawn on the basis of the survey in 1916. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

positions of the existing rivers and canals were altered, and the general pattern of the water courses were maintained.

Before we move on to the next section of this chapter, I would like to discuss in passing a couple of seemingly peculiar aspects of the walls of the city of Suzhou. Of many "irregular" features of the roughly rectangular form of the city, the varied shapes of the four corners of the walls are picked up by Yu Shengfang (1980:18) for discussion. Solely on the basis of the plan of the city presented on the 1229 picture map (see Figures 4-2 and 4-3), Yu argues, and Johnston (1983:200) apparently agrees with him, that the north-east and north-west corners were splayed to facilitate water flow in times of flood, the south-west corner was bulged to resist the brunt of the coming flood and to prevent water from rushing into the city, and the south-east corner remained square since at this point the water flowed away from the city. Yet on a comparison between this map and the maps of later periods, it is reasonable to suspect that the 1229 map may be very much a figurative presentation; that is, the distinct configurations of the walls at the four corners shown on this map merely roundly represent the actual features which are portrayed more faithfully by the city maps of later periods.

Even if we are to assume that the 1229 map represents the city form literally, the conclusion of Yu's analysis still seems questionable. It is my understanding that floods in the Suzhou area, frequently as they occurred, were caused more by either prolonged heavy rains that outpaced the drainage, leading to the rise of water level, or by the floods in the Upper or Middle Yangzi regions causing the overflow of Lake Tai to the South-west of the city and its surrounding rivers, than by the mountain torrents presumed by Yu. In either case, the direction of the drainage was in the east, and thus there is no reason in this respect for the north-east corner of the walls' being splayed because it too was a point where the water flowed away from the city. Moreover, the river leading to Pan Gate at the south-west corner directly connected to the easternmost mouth of Lake Tai, and was therefore a source of incoming floods from the lake. Had the bulging of the south-west corner of the walls been the builders' response to the local conditions of water flows, it would ironically have resulted in increasing the danger of influx of water into the city rather than preventing it. Although some doubts are cast on Yu's argument, I must admit that, with the limited materials presently available to us, I have not as yet found any alternative and more convincing explanations of these somewhat curious aspects.

Similarly, because of the lack of any information about the activities of building the city walls from the fall of the state of Wu in the early fifth century B.C. to their first recorded reconstruction in A.D. 876 by Zhang Tuan, and because of the insufficiency of data concerning the precise city form until the creation of the picture map of the city, *Pingjiang Tu*, in 1229, the questions of how, when and why the city acquired some of its other characteristic physical features that existed constantly throughout subsequent history are difficult to answer. Paradoxically it is precisely in this difficulty that one may find room for speculation. The city plan at present is oriented 7°54' east of true south,[250] and it is most likely that this was by and large also the case for the city in 1229 which is presented by the *Pingjiang Tu*, or probably earlier, the basic form of the city having, as I have argued, remained unchanged from that time onward. Yu Shengfang (1980:19) again suggests that, since the alignment of most buildings in the city was co-ordinated with that of the city walls, this orientational deviation was deliberately determined so that the prevailing south-east winds would cool the buildings of the city in summer and bring warmth in winter. This is a more than weak explanation indeed. Johnston (1983:200) sees another reason for this feature as more cogent; that is, that it was probably associated with the situation pointed out by Needham (1962:312-3) that discrepancies in city alignments in later times may have derived from adherence to the theories of rival schools of geomancy after the discovery of magnetic declination during the ninth century. Yet we do not really know whether this orientation of the city was newly obtained during these later periods, or simply part of the legacy of the Wu capital city in the late sixth century or at least of the city in the pre-Tang era; nor do we have any descriptions of the specific techniques applied to the determination of the city's orientation that may have produced slightly different results.[251]

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250 This result was obtained in 1978 by the Surveying Team of Suzhou Bureau of City Construction Control. (Yu 1980:19 & 20, note 9)

251 Paul Wheatley (1971:426) summarises a few techniques used by the Chinese in early times for the orientation of cities. One was the determination of a north-south axis by bisection of the angle between the directions of the rising and setting of the sun; this procedure is recorded in the "Kaogong Ji" section of the *Zhou Li*, (for quotations from it, see sections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2) and is suggested by Wheatley as having been attributable to the layout of those cities with a more or less accurate orientation. Another technique was that the north-south axis was determined by reference to the celestial pole, the result of which was prone to an orientation of a few degrees east of the true north, because not only as a result of precession does the celestial pole move along the arc of a circle having the pole of the ecliptic for its centre, but also the pole stars in Zhou times were a few degrees distant from the celestial pole. A third technique current from the Han period onwards was the use of a primitive form of compass known as *zhinan* 指南 (lit. "the

4.4 STRUCTURE AND CONFIGURATION OF THE WALLS

Needham (1971:37-8) has indicated that the most ancient form of walling in China was that of *terre pisé* or tamped earth, by which removable elongated boxes or forms (*ban* 版 or *gan* 榦) without tops or bottoms were used and dry earth was rammed within them at successively higher levels as the wall rose; and that in Chinese practice it was customary to use rubble stone without binding material as the foundation of walls, and to spread a layer of thin bamboo stems between each *pisé* block so as to hasten thorough drying-out. Whereas by the Han period baked bricks (*zhuan* 磚) were becoming general, and largely replaced the adobe, i.e. sun-dried mud (*pi* 坯), common in late Zhou times, they were usually used in no other structures than graves until the Northern Wei 魏 period around the fourth century. (Liu 1980:63, 97) In the early Tang, even on such important city walls as the palatial wall of the imperial capital Chang'an, brick-facing was only applied around the gates and corners; but from the end of the Tang into the Five Dynasties (*Wudai* 五代) period in the first half of the tenth century, the walls of many large cities in the South were all entirely faced with bricks. (Op.cit. 154) Suzhou being one of these cities acquired its brick-facing of walls for the first time in A.D. 922, (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16) as I have mentioned earlier, while the cores of the walls may be conjectured as having remained earth or rubble.

Like the walls of many other cities in imperial China, the walls of Suzhou did not always rise straight out of the ground or the water-filled moats. They frequently had a supporting platform or plinth. It is recorded in PXJJ, for example, that three layers of dressed stone blocks were applied to the construction of the plinth of the walls in the late Yuan period. The walls were always battered, i.e. they sloped markedly inwards to the top; Needham (1971:46) sees a contrast here between this Chinese practice and that of the medieval West where the walls of castles are often seen as perpendicular. Significant variations in the proportion of the gradually inward recession of the walls upward to their height may have existed in different regions and during different periods of time, since it was determined by factors such as the strength of the building materials available at the time and place

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south-pointing [instrument]"), which may also have been responsible for cities' orientational discrepancies, since declination was easterly until Song times, after which the compass needle began to show a westerly declination. (For a discussion of magnetic declination and the compass needle in China, see Needham 1962:301-13)

of the construction, the contemporary building technology, and the local conventions of construction work. From the "Kaogong Ji" section of the *Zhou Li*, we understand that it was regarded as the Zhou convention that the proportion of the recession to the height should be 1:6; and this proportion as a principle remained approximately the same throughout subsequent history,[252] even though it was not always strictly followed in many specific cases, and as we shall see below the proportion varied significantly in the wall constructions of Suzhou during different periods of time.

The sectional dimensions of the walls of the city of Suzhou in the imperial era were recorded for the first time after they were strengthened in A.D. 922. According to Lu Xiong's quotation from the *Xiangfu Tujing* which has long been lost, the walls measured 2 *zhang* 4 *chi* (approx. 7.416m at the Song standard) high, and 2 *zhang* 5 *chi* (approx. 7.725m) thick at the base.[253] Mote (1973:53) claims that the walls at this time "were enlarged to what is approximately their size throughout subsequent history, i.e., about twenty-five feet high and twenty-five feet thick at the base." The information I have gathered from the documents of the subsequent dynasties, however, indicates clearly that notable variations existed in the sectional size of the walls. In Table 4-2 I list the records of the sectional dimensions of the walls in four dynastic periods from A.D. 922 on. The proportion of the height to the thickness of the walls in the Tang and probably also in the Song was very close to 1:1; their section in the Yuan and Ming looks to have been shorter and thicker; while in the Qing it became much slimmer.[254] The top of the walls was entirely paved with bricks to make a roadway in the late Yuan, (PXJJ) and probably retained this feature in later times. In times of peace, the populace had free access to it,

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252 See, e.g., *Yingzao Fashi* (vol. 3) for the officially stipulated proportion in the Song period. For discussions of this work, see Glahn (1975, 1981).

253 SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi." Since the *Xiangfu Tujing* was written in the Song dynasty, the measurements are converted accordingly at the Song standard as 1 *chi* = 0.309m.

254 Cf. PXJJ; *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi;" *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu;" *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20: "Yudi Zhi": "Chengchi": "Suzhoufu;" GTJ, 114/62; *Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 1; and SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi." Xu Song 徐崧 (1617-1690) and Zhang Dachun 張大純 (1637-1702) have claimed in their *Baicheng Yanshui* (vol. 1) written in the early Qing that the walls in the Yuan measured 3 *zhang* 3 *chi* high. In terms of the sectional proportion of the walls, this account seems more logical, although it conflicts with that given in PXJJ produced much earlier, in the late Yuan. The account of the thickness of the walls in the Qing reads a little ambiguously in all contemporary documents available to me, in that it has not been explicitly indicated whether the account means the thickness at the base or at the top. In the *Jiangnan Tongzhi* the character *guang* 廣 (lit. "width") is used to depict the thickness of the walls, which conveys a strong sense of the measurement on the top of the walls; whereas in the other documents the character *hou* 厚 (lit. "thickness") is used, which implies the measurement at the base.

often simply for pleasure strolling; (see, e.g., *Su Tan*, "Wujing Wenlei") but occasionally it became a place for spontaneous public gatherings, as in the case of 1626 when it was thronged with locals in protest at the arrest of a respected local official. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 147: "Zaji," no. 4) Only when martial law was imposed upon the city in times of real crisis did it became a forbidden area. In the autumn of 1653, for example, a rebellion broke out in the coastal areas and threatened the cities of the Yangzi Delta. Soldiers were assigned to the city walls, and ordinary people were prohibited from walking on them. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. C)

From the 1229 picture-map of the city (see Figure 4-3, and later Figures 4-10 and 4-11), such features as bastions (*mamian* 馬面) and parapets (*nüqiang* 女牆) with battlements (*zhidie* 雉堞) are clearly discernible on the walls, at least the latter two continuously being present throughout subsequent history. The height of the parapets is recorded to have been 6 *chi*, i.e. 1.92m in the Ming and 1.86m in the Qing. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi;" *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20: "Yudi Zhi": "Chengchi": "Suzhoufu") The *Jiangnan Tongzhi* (op. cit.) even records that the total number of crenellations were three thousand and fifty-one in the Qing. Yet the most conspicuous features of the walls must have been the gate-towers. Needham is acutely aware that Chinese city-walls were never complete without their watch-towers and gate-towers, usually single structures of two or three storeys. (1971:46) Indeed, apart from the gate-towers of the city of Suzhou which will be dealt with in the following section, there were buildings serving as garrison posts (*pushe* 鋪舍 or *wopu* 窩鋪) within a sixteen-metre distance between them on the walls in the Ming. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: *Chengchi*) A total of one hundred and fifty-seven of them is recorded to have been built on the walls in the Qing, plus fifty-seven watch-towers (*ditai* 敵臺) on the bastions. (*Jiangnan Tongzhi*, op.cit.)

4.5 CITY GATES

It was almost inconceivable for the gates of important cities in the late imperial period not to be topped with gate-towers, except in the case of a number of small county cities and some walled forts on the frontiers. The ubiquity of this practice manifests both the pragmatic and psychological value of the city gates in the history of Chinese city construction. The city gates of Suzhou were indeed so highly regarded that, according to Lu Xiong of the Ming, in the final years of the Northern Song in the 1110s when wall-restoration work was conducted, a stone-

slab was erected at the position of each of the abandoned or blocked gates, on which the name of the gate was engraved in order for it to be remembered.[255]

The special attention paid to the city gates was also reflected in their exquisite, symbolic names. I have argued in section 2.5 that the specific names used for architectural structures functioned as vehicles for linking man's imaginings to real artefacts. The sedulous studies and interpretations of the naming of the city gates of Suzhou were such that this topic invariably occupied considerable space in all local documents and gazetteers; and this predilection culminated in the *Wujun Tujing Xuji* written by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 of the Northern Song, in which a whole separate section is exclusively devoted to the explanation of the matter and is thus entitled "Menming" 門名 (lit. "the names of the gates"). Zhu Mu 祝穆 of the Southern Song in his *Fangyu Shenglan* (vol. 2: "Pingjiangfu") published during the period between 1225 and 1264 has noticed that the names of the city gates of all states in the Spring and Autumn period were all composed of one character only, and that Suzhou was the sole city which retained the ancient names of its gates. His contemporary Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) echoed this observation in his *Rongzhai Suibi* ("Xubi," vol. 8: "Lieguo Chengmen Ming") and claimed that the name of either a prefecture or a city gate was elegant if it was made up of a single character. From these remarks, one can sense an admiration for the long, continuous history of the city of Suzhou, its refinement over time and its superior cultural heritage; one can also appreciate the great esteem in which its city gates were held both in reality and in theory.

While acknowledging the tendency of the city of Suzhou to retain these traits through the ages, we should not ignore the fact that change did occur in the number and position of its gates in history. It is revealed in most of the local documents from as early as the Tang period on that scholars were exerting unceasing efforts at investigating the origins and later transformation of the city gates which must have been regarded as a particularly important part of the prefectural institution and a salient symbol of the local history. These efforts indicate significant change. Whereas the locations and designations of the eight gates of the city at the time of its construction by Wu Zixu in the late Zhou, as has been discussed in Chapter Three, remain a matter of dispute, their development in the imperial era, especially from 1229 onward, appears to be much clearer. From Table 4-3, in which the

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255 See SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Chengchi" with quotations from Lu's *Suzhoufu Zhi*. Cf. *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi."

Table 4-2 Records of the sectional dimensions of the walls of the city of Suzhou from A.D. 922 onwards[1]

Dynasty	Year	Measurement
Later Liang	A.D. 922	2 *zhang* 4 *chi* in height; 2 *zhang* 5 *chi* in thickness.[2]
Yuan	1351	23 *chi* in height; 16 *chi* in breath at the top; 35 *chi* in thickness at the base.[3]
Ming	*c.* late 1360s	2 *zhang* 3 *chi* in height; 1 *zheng* 8 *chi* in breath at the top;[4] 3 *zhang* 5 *chi* in thickness at the base; (parapets) 6 *chi* in height.[2]
Qing	1662	2 *zhang* 8 *chi* in height; 1 *zhang* 8 *chi* in thickness; (parapets) 6 *chi* in height.[5]

1 For the conversion of the old Chinese length units into modern ones, see Liu 1980:416.

2 *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16.

3 PXJJ.

4 *Jiangnan Jinglüe*, vol. 2A.

5 *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20.

Table 4-3 Records of the number and names of the city gates of Suzhou through history

Dynasty/Year	Names	Total Number
Eastern Zhou (late 6th century)	Chang, Xu, Pan, She, Jiang, Lou, Qi, Ping	Eight (each twinned for both road and water traffic)[1]
Qin - Tang (3rd century B.C. - A.D. 10th century)	Chang, Xu, Pan, She, Jiang, Lou, Qi, Feng (or Ping)	Eight (each twinned for both road and water traffic)[2]
Early Song (late 10th - early 11th century)	Chang, Xu, Pan, Feng, Lou, Qi	Six (each twinned for both road and water traffic)[3]
Song - Southern Song (mid-11th century - 1279)	Chang, Pan, Feng, Lou, Qi	Five (each twinned for both road and water traffic)[4]
Yuan - Qing (1353 - early 20th century)	Chang, Xu, Pan, Feng, Lou, Qi	Six (except the Xu Gate, each twinned for both road and water traffic)[5]

1 *Wudi Ji*. Cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vols. 4, 5 & 10.

2 Cf. *Wudu Fu*; *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A; *Wujun Zhi*, vols. 3 & 48.

3 Cf. *Taiping Huangyu Ji*, vol. 91; *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1.

4 Cf. *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A; *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1.

5 Cf. *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16; *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4.

information about the number of the city gates with their names in successive dynastic periods is gathered, we may see that the total number of the gates continued to be eight until as late as the beginning of the Northern Song in the mid-tenth century, although one of them may have been changed; i.e. Ping 平 Gate in the north by west was probably abandoned, while a new gate, Feng 葑 in the east by south, was opened after the fall of the state of Wu.

During the early Song period, two gates were blocked and thus only six of them were in use, which all facilitated both the land and water passages;[256] but at least by 1084, old Xu 胥 Gate in the west by south had also been blocked, whereupon a platform for scenery viewing, Gusu Tai 姑蘇臺 was constructed as part of a building complex known as the Gusu Guan 姑蘇館 (lit. "Guest House of Gusu") built in 1144 by the prefect Wang Huan 王喚. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 3: "Chengguo," vol. 7: "Guanyu") This feature is clearly evidenced on the 1229 picture map of the city (Figure 4-10). The reopening of Xu Gate in the late Yuan in 1353 when the city walls were reconstructed, was inspired by the finding of a stone-slab with the two characters *Xumen* 胥門 ("Xu Gate") engraved on it, which was dug out on the spot where the Song dynasty Gusu Guan was located; (see, e.g., *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi") but, according to the *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 4: "Chengchi"), this gate remained the only one which did not cater for waterborne traffic throughout subsequent dynasties. Few changes are found in the total number of the gates and their positions from 1353 to the end of the Qing, except for the addition to them in 1356 of the semicircular or rectangular counterscarps (*yuecheng* 月城, lit. "the wall in the form of the Moon," or *wengcheng* 甕城, lit. "the wall in the form of an urn"). (*Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu")

Structures associated with the city gates became more complicated from as early as the late Yuan. Apart from the gate-towers and counterscarps, there were at the gates halls where the officials in charge of the city entrance did their routine duties, barracks with armouries for soldiers guarding the gates in case of an emergency, and buildings functioning as guest houses.[257] Drawbridges started to be recorded in the mid-Ming, if not earlier. (*Gusu Zhi*, op. cit.) Of those of the other five gates, the drawbridge of Chang Gate was the largest and most splendid, its surface being paved with stone-slabs. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. B) Whereas the city

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256 Cf. *Taiping Huanyu Ji*, vol. 91: "Jiangnan Dongdao," no. 3: "Suzhou;" *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu."

257 Cf. PXJJ; *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi;" *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 20: "Yudi Zhi": "Chengchi": "Suzhoufu;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi."

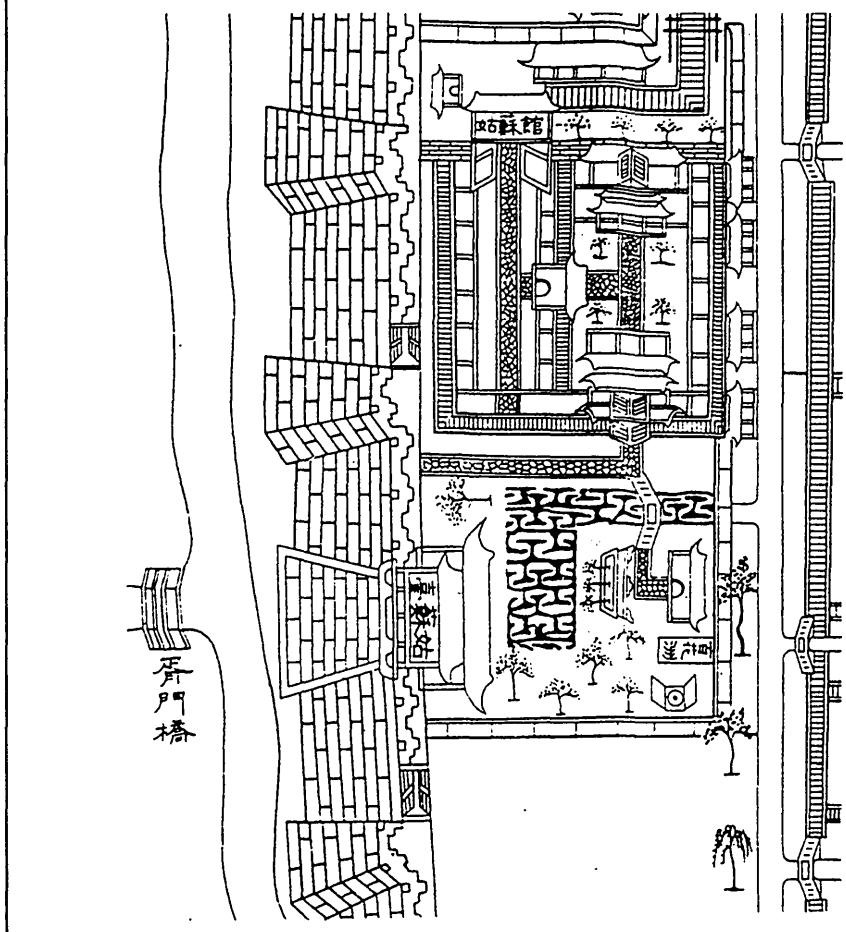

Figure 4-10 Section of the 1229 picture map of the city of Suzhou showing the details of Gusu Guan ("Guest House of Gusu") by Xu Gate, blocked along the west city walls. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

gates were closed at every night, their keys being kept by the local army commanders, (*Gusu Zhi*, op. cit.; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, op. cit.) the real task of the officials and soldiers stationed at the gates was, in normal times, as Zheng Yuanyou puts it, "keeping an eye on unusual situations;" (PXJJ) in other words, they were merely part of the deterrents against such serious criminal activities as banditry and robbery, and access to the city was not at all impeded in ordinary circumstances. In fact, partly because of the busy night life in the city and around its west suburbs, the gates must have been closed much later each day than those of the cities in the coastal areas where threat from pirates was much more serious.[258] Amongst these six gates, Pan Gate is the only one which survived both the wars in the first half of this century, and thereafter the demolition of the walls to give way to modern constructions. Pan Gate was fully repaired in the second half of the 1980s. Figure 4-11 is the section of the city walls at Pan Gate depicted on the 1229 map; Figure 4-12 shows a diagrammatic plan of the gate with its artificial surroundings drawn in 1983 which nevertheless is probably close to its actual configuration during the Ming and Qing periods; and Figure 4-13 contains a photograph of the gate taken before the war against the Japanese, and a photograph of it after its reconstruction in the 1980's.

As has been seen in Figures 4-3 - 4-9, the *de facto* disposition of the gates of the city from as early as 1229 onward looks entirely asymmetrical. It has been argued by Yu Shengfang (1980:19) that the asymmetry of the locations of the city gates in later times was a result of considerations of the topographical conditions of the site, and of the control of water flowing eastward in the intramural canal system. This line of argument, followed by Johnston, (1983:200) seems plausible; but it should be noted that it only points to one of the possibilities, none of which is exhaustive. In fact, we cannot be sure whether the locations of the gates from 1229 onward were significantly altered from those of their predecessors. We have argued that the city had a total of eight gates continuously from its foundation down to the

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258 According to Shen Fu 沈復 (1763-1808 or after), a native of Suzhou, the city gates of Suzhou were closed well after mid-night, and were opened no later than five in the morning. (*Fusheng Liuji*, vols. 1 and 3) He was so used to the late hour of gate closing of his home city that, in the mid 1780s when he sojourned briefly in the city of Guangzhou 廣州 on the southern coast, he was once unexpectedly shut out of this unfamiliar city at about nine o'clock after a late drink with his friends in the suburb. (*Fusheng Liuji*, vol. 4) Even in 1645, the year of turbulent transition from the Ming to the Qing rule over the Suzhou area, after two months of being closed, Chang Gate was opened from as early as three in the morning to as late as seven in the evening by order of the Qing general Tu Guogao 土國寶, whereby officials and soldiers at the gate were instructed not to hinder travellers and peddlers, but only pay attention to bandits. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. B)

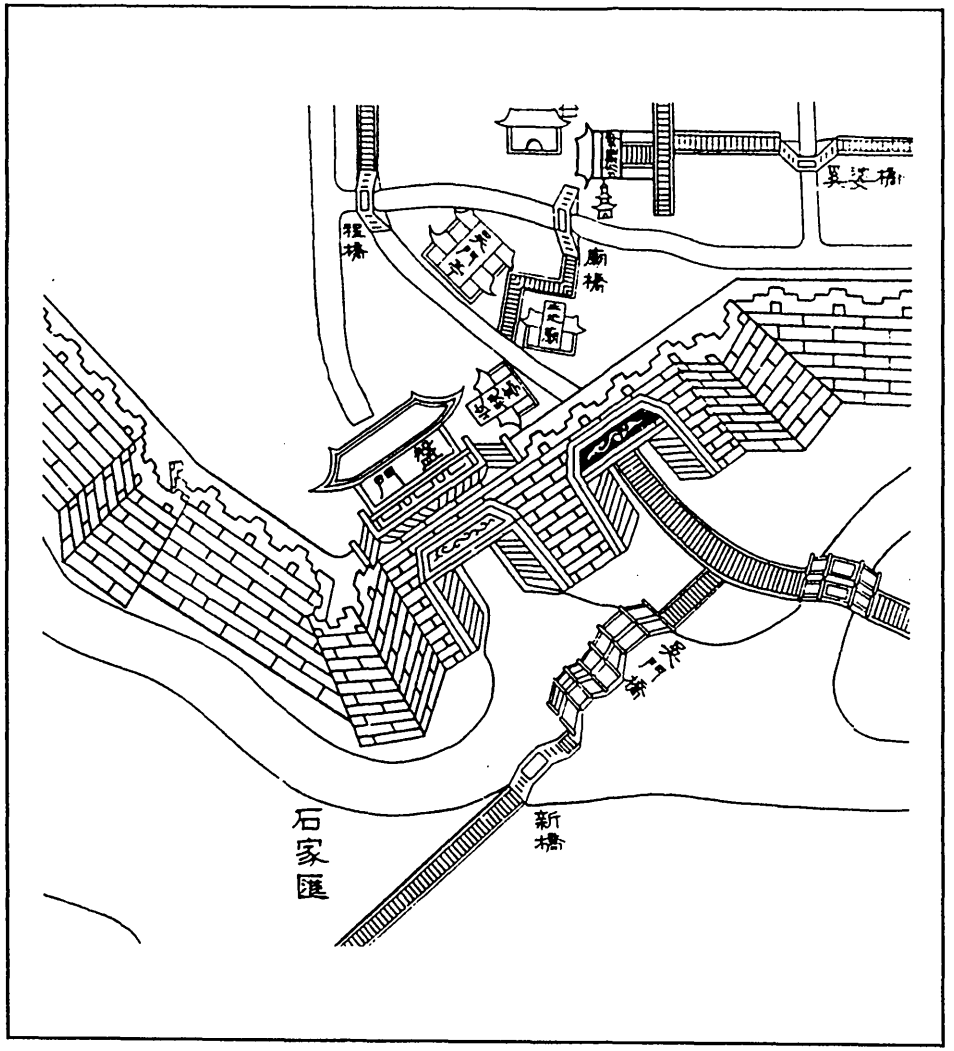

Figure 4-11 Section of the 1229 picture map of the city of Suzhou showing the details of Pan Gate during the Southern Song period. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

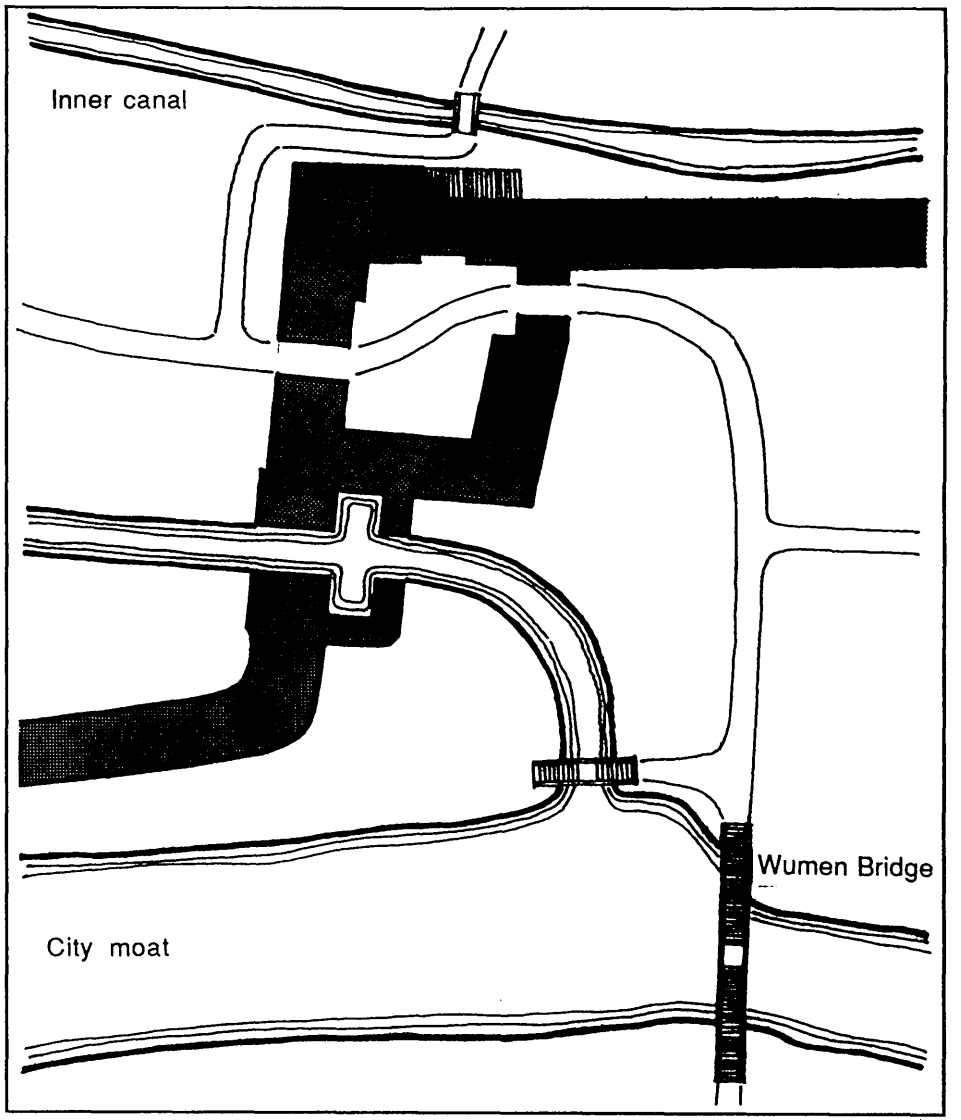

Figure 4-12 Diagrammatic plan of Pan Gate as surveyed and drawn in 1983 by Xu Yinong.

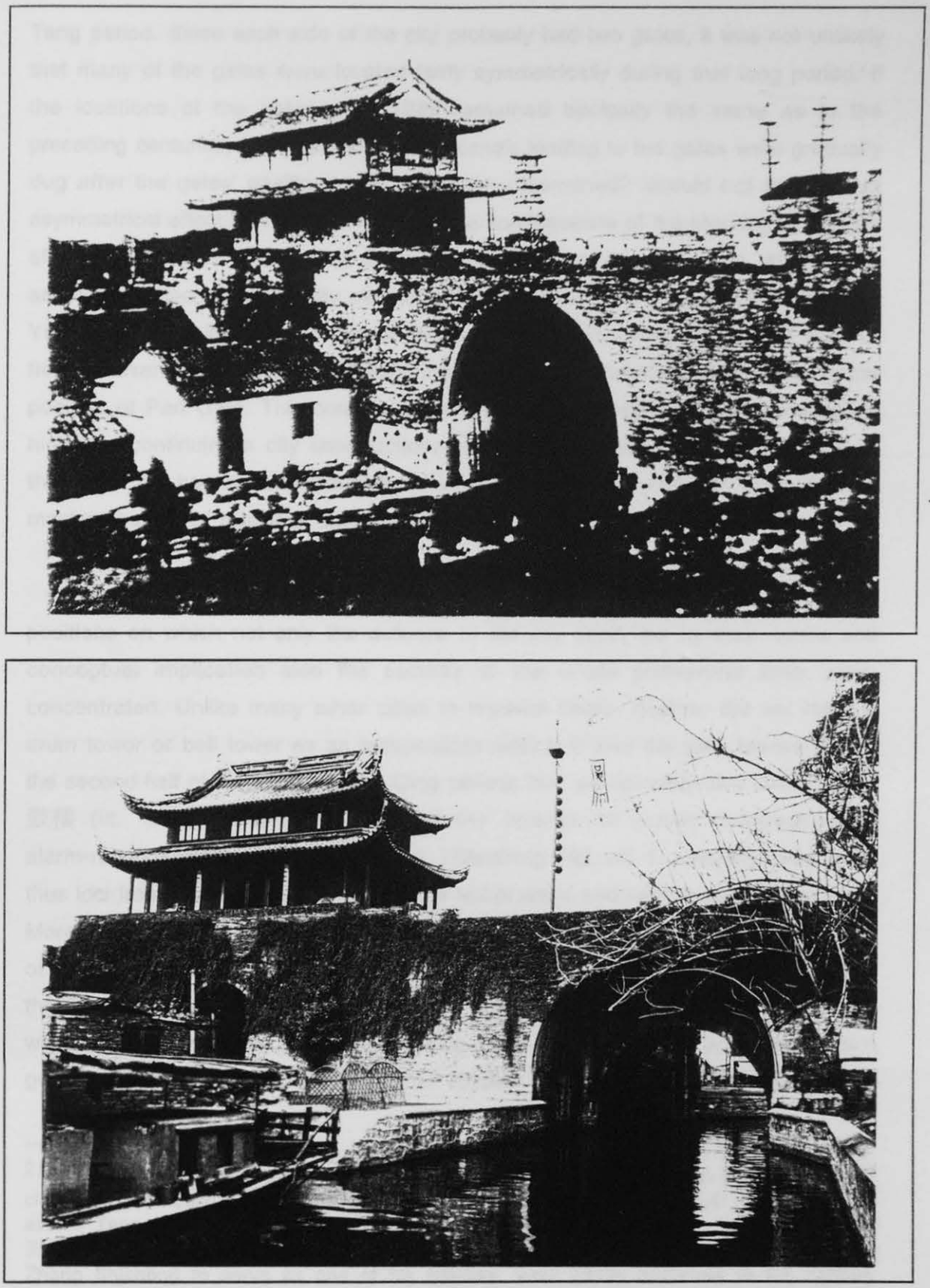

Figure 4-13 Photograph (top) of Pan Gate in the early twentieth century before the gate-tower was destroyed in the Sino-Japanese War; (Cao and Wu 1986:81) and photograph (bottom) of the same gate reconstructed between 1983-1986, the picture taken in 1991 by Xu Yinong.

Tang period. Since each side of the city probably had two gates, it was not unlikely that many of the gates were located fairly symmetrically during that long period. If the locations of the gates after 1229 remained basically the same as in the preceding centuries, is it possible that the canals leading to the gates were gradually dug *after* the gates' positions had long been determined? Should not the present asymmetrical effect be regarded more as the consequence of the blocking of the two of the eight gates in the early Song and of still another after 1144, than as an adaptable response of the city planners and builders to the local environment? But Yu's essential point holds. The form of the city of Suzhou does display the traits of flexible arrangement in city building, one of the most notable features being the position of Pan Gate. This conclusion, however, by no means implies a negligible historical continuity in city construction; and any further analysis of the extent of this flexibility necessitates discoveries of more evidence. After all, the city was most probably not rebuilt at any time *ab ovo* in the imperial era.

The gates of the city of Suzhou were in their own right undoubtedly the positions on which not only the defence of the city itself, but by their social and conceptual implication also the security of the whole prefectural area, were concentrated. Unlike many other cities in imperial China, Suzhou did not have a drum tower or bell tower as an independent edifice; it was the gate towers during the second half of the Ming and the Qing periods that, occasionally also called *gulou* 鼓樓 (lit. "drum tower"),[259] assumed the function of public time-reckoning, alarm-raising and command-signalling. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. 1: *passim*) They were thus loci from whence the maintenance of social order and security was transmitted. Moreover, if the city walls symbolised the presence of government and its upholding of social order, the city gates by their practical attributes represented the openings through which the function of government was carried out: they were the places where not only were public injunctions most often pasted, but also where government relief was provided to those stricken by natural calamities.[260]

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259 According to the *Wuxian Zhi*, (vol. 29B: "Gongshu," no. 2) the south gate of the inner city, known as Qiaolou 譙樓, functioned as a drum/horn (*gujiao* 鼓角) tower from as early as the Tang period, although it was only in 1149 that a more accurate clepsydra (*kelou* 刻漏) was installed in it. Yet in 1366 the buildings of the inner enclosure, taken over by Zhang Shicheng to serve as one of his palaces, were totally destroyed in the fighting accompanying the entry into the city of the Ming forces led by Xu Da 徐達 (1332-1385). Only a section of the dilapidated walls around the south gate was left, whereupon later in the first half of the Ming an official drum was placed to sound the night watches, thereby gaining it the popular name Gulou. (*Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu")

260 See, e.g., *Wucheng Riji*, vol. C; XXZ, vol. A: "Qianlong Wushinian Yisi Hanhuang."

True, the city gates formed unambiguous passages through which the inside and the outside of the city were divided and connected simultaneously; symbolically, however, they were on some occasions also the thresholds marking out one's homeland from the outside world, regardless of whether one lived in the city or the countryside. A minor incident recorded by Yang Xunji 楊循吉 (1458-1546) in his *Su Tan* ("Tongcun Shiwu") reflects this trait of the city gates. Zhou Boqi 周伯器[261] (1401-1487), a Jiaxing 嘉興 Confucian scholar of the Ming, teaching at that time in the Suzhou area, voluntarily offered his services to an imperial task force sent out from Suzhou in the late 1440s to quell a rebellion in distant Fujian 福建. It was not at the entrance of the army barracks in the city, nor at any other intersections of the marching-out route, but at Xu Gate by the city moat that he recommended himself to the commander of the troops. Apart from its possible convenience - his residence or place of teaching may have been in the close vicinity, this choice of location indicates that the gate probably represented for him the ideal point of departure from his home for him properly to embark with the expedition force for the remote regions.

I have shown in Chapter Two that the theme of symbolism seen as embodied in the construction and naming of the city gates of Helü Dacheng in the Spring and Autumn period was dominated by the conception of the city as a cosmic centre. Profound change in the social and political nature of the city from the Qin unification in 221 B.C. on inevitably led to the eclipse of this pre-eminent theme in the imperial era, whereas the symbolic characteristics of the city gates persisted. This aspect is best exemplified by the inscriptions on the gates after the reconstruction of the city walls in 1662:

> Chang 閶 Gate: "To open up and let in the *qi* ('cosmic breath') of the Changhe" (*qi tong Changhe* 氣通閶闔);[262]
>
> Xu 胥 Gate: "The emerald green gathering around [Mt.] Guxu" (*Guxu yongcui* 姑胥擁翠);[263]
>
> Pan 盤 Gate: "The [criss-crossed] land and water routes [resembling] a coiling dragon" (*longpan shuilu* 龍蟠水陸);[264]
>
> Lou 婁 Gate: "The magnificence manifested by the River [Yangzi]

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261 The usual name of this person was Zhou Ding 周鼎, Boqi being his given title.

262 Cf. section 2.5.1.

263 Cf. section 2.5.3.

264 Cf. section 2.5.2.

and the sea" (*Jianghai yanghua* 江海揚華) ;

Qi 齊 Gate: "Subjects' hearts [like a myriad of stars] surrounding and protecting the pole-star [i.e. the Emperor]" (*chenxin gongbei* 臣心拱北);[265]

Feng 葑 Gate: "Limpid brooks reflecting [the beauties of the prefecture]" (*xiliu qingying* 溪流清映) .

(*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 1)

These inscriptions were more than just a few poetic phrases attached to the city gates. They conveyed at least two messages concerning the distinctive way in which the city was perceived. First, although some of the ancient cosmological meanings of the gates continued to be appreciated in the imperial era, a fundamental change in their cosmic symbolism is obvious. The notion of the Changhe was still alive, and the heavenly *qi* which was opened up and let in to the city continued to be taken as a blessing. However, Chang Gate was not, as it was at the first time of its construction, seen as representing the Gate of Heaven corresponding to the Gate of Earth symbolised by She 蛇 Gate which had by then long been abandoned. Thus the city was no longer treated as being at the centre of the universe. In fact, no matter how esteemed it became, the city was in symbolic terms simply *a* regional city, i.e. one of the administrative centres of a unified empire, while the true centre of the world was, and could only have been, at the imperial capital where the Son of Heaven resided. It was only under the auspices of the Emperor whose earthly position was equivalent to that of the pole-star in Heaven, that the heavenly *qi* could be of benefit to the people of the city and the prefecture. In other words, the heavenly *qi* was no longer regarded as rendering the city cosmically more significant than others, but as bringing peace and prosperity to the prefecture as an integral part of the empire.

Second, the city housing the prefectural seat was not perceived as an entity of its own separated from the rural areas which were under the jurisdiction of the prefecture. Although its walls appear to have been physical boundaries between the urban and rural areas, they did not function socially and psychologically as lines of demarcation of the city as contrasted to the countryside, but rather symbolised those of the prefecture, just as the gates were conceptually analogous to the thresholds of the prefectural territory. Indeed, no urban characteristics were reflected at all from those inscriptions on the city gates, and three of them were

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265 Cf. section 2.2.2.2.

eulogies of the natural scenery of particular areas in the prefecture, each corresponding to the direction in which a specific gate led; in other words, the attributes of directional and territorial implications of these gates were explicitly revealed in these inscriptions. The role that the city gates played of representing the prefecture's orientation by reference to the four cardinal points was also partly revealed in the course of some seasonal festive rituals which were always a substantial aspect of social life in traditional China. Every year on the day prior to the Beginning of Spring (Lichun 立春), for example, the prefect went with his entourage to the Liuxian 柳仙 (lit. "willow deity") Hall just outside Lou Gate in the east to perform the ritual ceremony of the prefecture's entering the new season.[266] (*Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 1: "Xingchun") A few days later when the God of Joy (Xishen 喜神) was located in the true south,[267] the prefect then led the parade to the prefectural Altar of Mountains and Rivers (*shanchuantan* 山川壇) outside Pan Gate in the south to welcome the god by offering sacrifice to it. (Op.cit.: "Shanchuantan Yingxi")

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to address a number of important points concerning the transformation of the walls of Suzhou and the development of the city form. First, by citing the instance of the temporary transference of the city to a new site in A.D. 591, I have demonstrated that the city and its walls seem to have been an inseparable part of its specific natural setting in which local history was embedded; then I have argued that a walled city and a local capital in China's urban history did not practically and conceptually fall into two different categories - they were but one and the same phenomenon. Second, I have reviewed the history of the reconstruction of the city walls of Suzhou, calling particular attention to the fact that wall-construction from the Ming on, sharply in contrast to that in its preceding era, was extensively pursued in the early period of the dynasty. It seems precisely in the late imperial period that the symbolic role of the city walls became more salient. Third, on the basis of the written and pictorial materials, I have

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266 Ceremonies of similar kind conducted in the east suburbs are found in many other parts of China. (Song and Li 1991:2405)

267 This was believed to occur on the days *ding* 丁 and *ren* 壬, the Ten Heavenly Branches being used to designate the sequence of days. For more information about this god and its rotational locations, see Zong and Liu 1987:660-1; Ma 1990:308-9 with citations from the *Xieji Bianfangshu* 協紀辨方書 compiled in the eighteenth century.

strongly suggested that from the late Tang onwards the length of the city walls of Suzhou may not have altered significantly, falling within the range between fifteen and seventeen kilometres, and that the position of the walls and thus the form of the city defined by them basically remained unchanged, although for whatever the reasons, historical records substantially differ on this point. After a cursory description of the configuration of the wall-structures, I have then devoted the last section of this chapter to a discussion of the transformation of the city gates of Suzhou. As an integral, but more salient, part of the city walls, their origins, nomenclature and transformation constantly constituted one of the subjects of great topical interest for local scholars in the imperial era. I have illustrated the continuation of the symbolic nature of the city gates, but at the same time emphasised a profound shift of their symbolism from signifying the city as a cosmic centre from which Wu strove for hegemony, to the signifying of its allegiance and homage to the Emperor and central authority.

Since the main purpose of this study is to illustrate some general points about the nature of traditional Chinese cities and an appropriate way of studying them, it is necessary here to make some further suggestions on the significance of city walls in China's urban experience and society in general. Walls were undoubtedly of paramount importance for Chinese cities. Sirén (1929:557) in the 1920s has made an apt and graphic remark about the walls of traditional China, stressing their ubiquity and essentiality in Chinese communities:

> Walls, walls, and yet again walls, form the framework of every Chinese city. They surround it, they divide it into lots and compounds, they mark more than any other structures the basic features of the Chinese communities. There is no real city in China without a surrounding wall, a condition which indeed is expressed by the fact that the Chinese used the same word *ch'eng* [*cheng* 城] for a city and a city wall; there is no such thing as a city without a wall. It would be just as inconceivable as a house without a roof. These walls belong not only to the provincial capitals or other large cities, but to every community, even small towns and villages.

Needham's (1971:42) comment on this passage right before he quotes it is that "everyone who knows China will recognise this as true;" but one should not let this landscape of an apparent continuum of walls, possibly in a hierarchy of their size, configuration, material, and the like, obscure a fundamental distinction between the city walls and walls of other institutions, even though this distinction may have been less obvious in physical form than in conception. In the "Kaogong" part of the

encyclopaedia *Gujin Tushu Jicheng*, for example, as in many other documents of similar nature, city wall (with moat) is classified separately from all other kinds of walls, which are gathered under a single category. Whereas many villages and a number of towns were fortified, their walls, like those of houses, temples, etc., could in no way be termed *cheng*, unless the settlements in question later became local centres of imperial administration, thus automatically being upgraded to cities, which upgrading would in many cases be accompanied by reconstruction work to enlarge and strengthen their walls. Therefore, only those walls, often vast in size and sophisticated in their configuration, enclosing the proper establishments of imperial government, were entitled to this exclusive term. Their significance transcended that of other types of walls; they symbolised authority, order, and of course security.

Yet the city walls' symbolism of protection was not confined to the city itself. Since a regional or local city in the imperial era was invariably the administrative centre of the region in which it was located, its walls were perceived by the Chinese as a defence instrument for the entire territory under the jurisdiction of that regional or local government, although technically they became an effective barrier for the city itself in times of siege. This attribute of the walls was explicitly specified by Qin Huitian 秦蕙田 (1702-1764) in his *Wuli Tongkao* (vol. 45: "Jili," no. 45: "Sheji") where he enunciates the necessity of the worship of the God of the City Walls and Moats (Chenghuang 城隍): "The high walls and deep moats [of a city] are the protection (*pinghan* 屏翰) of a certain region." Similar remarks were made by Zheng Yuanyou of the Yuan on this property of the walls of the city of Suzhou, stressing the importance of the event of their reconstruction in 1351, (PXJJ) and by Zheng Ruozeng in the late Ming, who classified cities in accordance with their relative strategic importance: "there are cities that have significant bearings on the vital interests either of a region or of [even a larger territory of] several hundred *li* across." (*Jiangnan Jinglüe*, vol. 1A: "Bingwu Juyao": "Shou Cheng") It is worth noting that the term *pinghan* was used in traditional literature more often for its connotation - "important and reliable local officials who defend the state" (cf. CY, II, 1980:910; CH, 1980:1074) - than for its literal sense. Thus it would not be unreasonable to interpret Qin Huitian's sentence as equivalent to "the high walls and deep moats of a city represent the presence of local government." Indeed, a *cheng* or *chengshi* 城市 in imperial China, which we translate as "a walled city," had to be the capital of a province or prefecture or county; "city" and "capital" were but one concept. A transference of the local

government elsewhere would usually have brought the *raison d'être* of the old settlement designated as a *cheng* to an end; and its walls, one of the prerequisites of its former status, would have lost most of their inherent meanings.

A prefecture or county was always identified terminologically with its capital city, for instance Suzhou prefecture was usually called Suzhoufu 蘇州府[268] and its capital city Suzhoucheng 蘇州城 (lit. "Walled City of Suzhou") or briefly the *fucheng* 府城 (lit. "the prefectural walled city"); and the geomantic fate of a prefecture or county was held to derive from the siting of its capital city. This siting was a physical and cultural integration of the city with the local milieu, and the real existence of the city was constituted by its being embedded in its surrounding environs. Except in times of real crisis and at night time, the walls of the city of Suzhou did not form a barrier between the city and the countryside. They were the "casket" (see section 3.3.4) conceptually extended in space to embrace all the historical and cultural valuables of the prefecture, both within the walls and without; in fact, the cultural relics located outside the city walls were by no means less cherished than those inside. In this sense, not only did the walls symbolise both the presence of the imperial government and the existence of an ideal social order, as I have discussed in the preceding chapter, but they also represented local history and culture, and their form became more important than the actual area they enclosed. Since the city walls were symbols, not physical boundaries, an alteration of them was probably seen as unnecessary and undesirable. In this line of reasoning, I would therefore venture to suggest that this symbolic nature of the city walls, together with a strong sense of the authority of the past constantly at work, was at least partly attributable to the remarkable stability of the city form of Suzhou, defined by the walls, from 1229 onward, and perhaps even much earlier. Homage to the past figured profoundly in Chinese history.

This suggestion, however, by no means implies a denial of the fact that the exact locations of the walls of a number of cities in South China and their specific urban forms were often largely the result of practical considerations concerning the particular local geographical and topographical conditions. The port city of Quanzhou 泉州 in Fujian 福建 is such an example. As Figure 4-14 shows, the irregular form of the city enclosed by the outer walls during the Ming and Qing

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268 This term could also mean "the city of Suzhou" often with an emphasis on "the administrative offices of the prefecture of Suzhou in its capital," or even on "the prefect" or "the prefect's administration."

periods was brought about by the restraints of local water courses and by the economic expansion of the city from the Song period onwards. (TDCGJ, 1982:53-7; WW-ZCGSY, 1985:406) This process of development appears to have been somewhat similar to that of many medieval cities in continental Europe, where, as Morris (1994:98-9) concludes, the consequence of horizontal growth of a city like Florence was marked in each stage by the construction of a new wall to include newly developed but previously undefended "suburbs."[269] Another example is the city of Nantong 南通 north of Suzhou on the north bank of the River Yangzi. From Figure 4-15 one can see that a new wall was built after the mid-Ming to enclose the south suburbs which were rapidly developed but very vulnerable to frequent plunder by pirates. (TDCGJ, 1982:101-3)

It should be emphasised that the processes of these two cities' development were not at all isolated instances in Chinese urban history, just as that of the city of Suzhou was not. The transformability of the city forms of Quanzhou and Nantong should be accounted for by a set of local historical, cultural and geographical conditions which together acted as an integral whole; so should the remarkable stability of the comparatively regular city form of Suzhou. Among these conditions, three seem to have figured most in Suzhou's development: (1) unlike the other two cities, both being constructed for the first time in the tenth century, (Quanzhou in 906, Nantong in 958), the city of Suzhou boasted a much longer history, and consequently the weight of its ancient heritage was enormous; (2) the economic and cultural importance of Suzhou far surpassed that of the other two, probably resulting in a more rigorous preservation of the city form, which was regarded as a "fixed institution;"[270] and (3) compared to Quanzhou located by Quanzhou Bay and Nantong by the River Yangzi, Suzhou was an inland city, and thus the pressure of building new walls to protect burgeoning suburbs from pirate attacks was apparently less strong. In any event, the development of the form of the city of Suzhou was a physical manifestation of the Chinese predilection for maintaining what had been achieved in the past; in other words, it may have been exemplary with respect to a tendency in Chinese urban history, but not necessarily typical of the usual outcome of this tendency.

The city walls, built massively with enduring materials, were obviously more

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269 In discussing the city of Florence, Braunfels (1988:51-2) explicitly asserts that the growth of the city found its expression in the building of the city walls.

270 See quotations from the *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 18: "Yudi Kao": "Chengchi" in section 2.6.

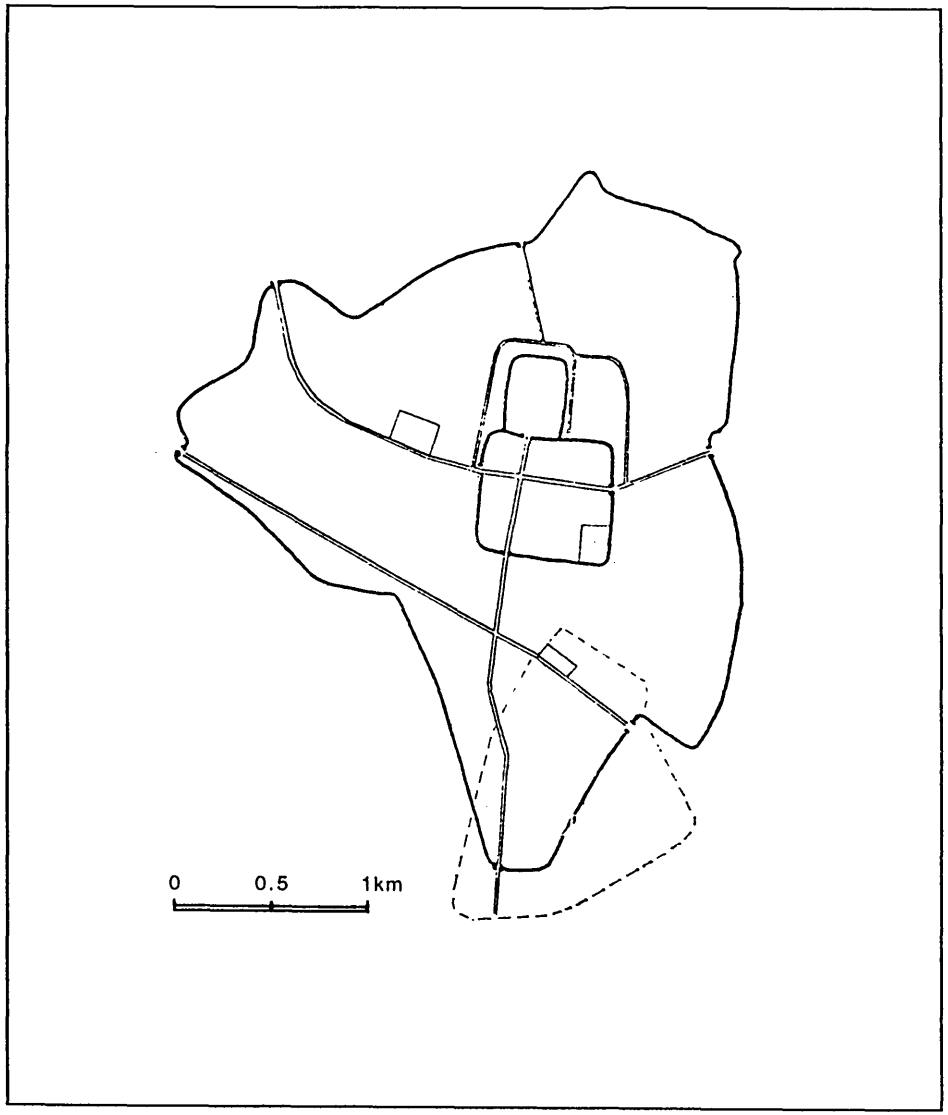

Figure 4-14 Reconstructed plan of the city of Quanzhou during the Yuan period, around the fourteenth century. (TDCGJ 1982:55, fig. 1-6-7)

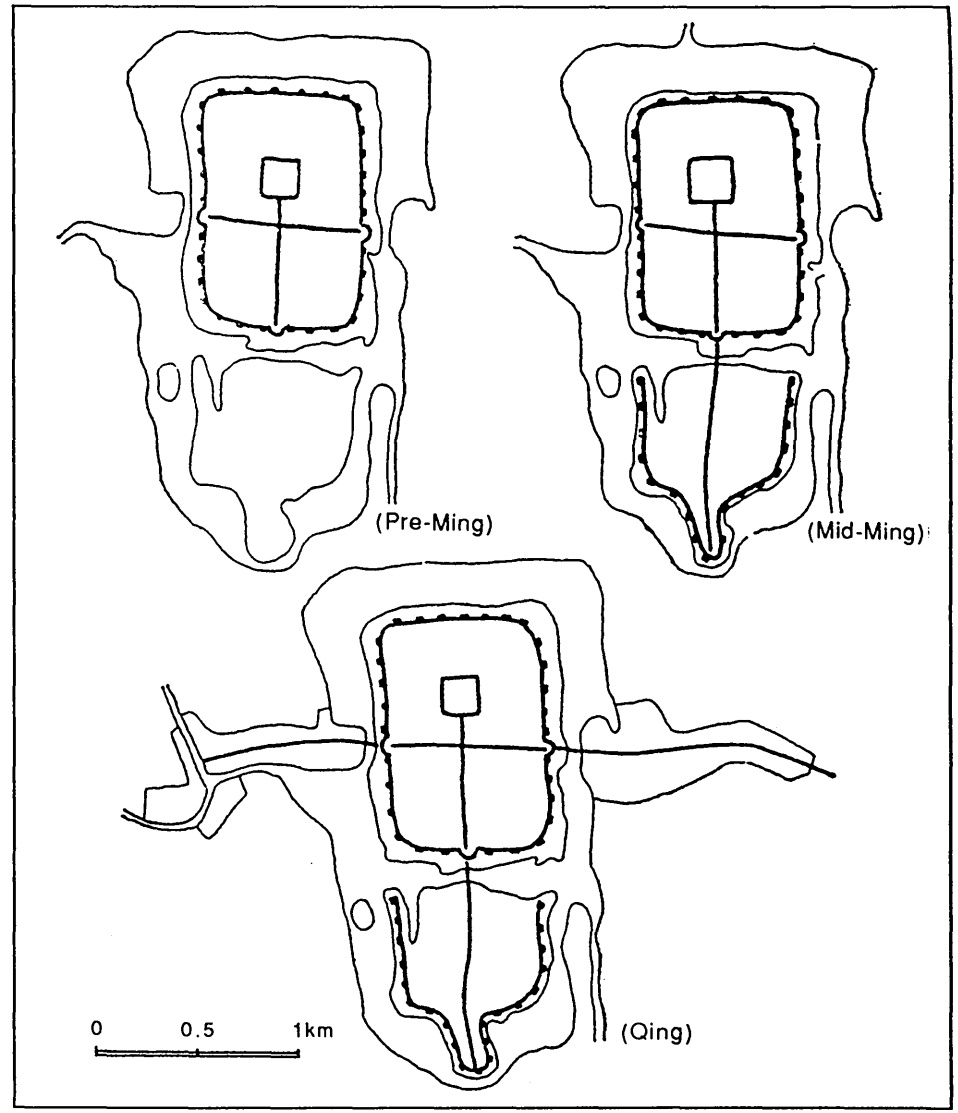

Figure 4-15 Plans of the city of Nantong from the pre-Ming period to the Qing. The southern-most part of the new walls built after the mid-Ming to protect the south suburbs of the city from pirate attacks, located right on the north edge of the River Yangzi. (TDCGJ 1982:101, fig. 1-7-28)

noticeable as a feature of the landscape and more capable of sustaining destructive forces of Nature and man than any other man-made structures except the underground tombs and a very few exceptional buildings. Therefore no one would doubt that for us the city walls "often tell more of the ancient greatness of the city than the houses or temples."[271] (Sirén 1929:557) Yet for the traditional Chinese they represented what was seen as constant in the vicissitudes of life. As the most imposing man-made structures apart from the Great Wall in the Chinese landscape, the city walls signified not only the grandeur of the city but also the continuation of a civilisation from the past to the future - they were timeless in the midst of temporal change. This Chinese perception of the city walls is revealed by a story told in Tao Qian's 陶潛 (*c.* A.D. 372-427) *Sou Shen Houji* (vol. 1). The story tells how Ding Lingwei 丁令威 who turned into an immortal crane after having studied the *dao* of immortality on Mt. Lingxu 靈虛 for a millennium, flew back to his home place Liaodong 遼東. When a teenage boy attempted a shot at him with an arrow at the city gate, he hovered around and sang a verse before flying into the high skies:

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271 Some locals may have regarded the city walls as emblematic of their home places. Gao Qi 高啟 (1336-1374) who may have resided in the north part of the city within the walls (Mote 1962:38) or outside but at least in their close vicinity, was one of such personalities. Among many of his poems associated with the Feng 楓 ("maple") Bridge over three kilometres west of the Suzhou city walls, two contain similarly contrasting perceptions of the distant city walls and the Hanshan 寒山 Buddhist Temple in the close vicinity of the bridge. The first one was written in 1368 at the Feng Bridge where the poet spent the night aboard his canal boat on his journey to the Ming court in Nanjing:

> Crows caw at this frosty moonlight night, hollow and forlorn,
> Turning back my head I see the city walls still not far.
> Truly a first night of many of longing for home,
> Distant bell-tolls, a lone boat, lodging by Maple Bridge.
> . . .
> (*Jiangfu Jinling Shichu Changmen Yebo* 將赴金陵始出閶門夜泊. In *Hanshan Si Zhi*, vol. 3: "Zhi Shi")

The second poem, written in 1370 at the same point on his return journey after almost two years service at court, has the following lines:

> From far off I see the city's walls, and still doubt that it's really so.
> I can't make out the green hills; only faintly glimpse the old pagoda.
> . . .
> The temple is hidden in the sunset haze, but the raven's call is here;
> With the autumn stream and the empty bridge, and the fledging ducks flying.
> . . .
> (*Gui Wu Zhi Fengqiao* 歸吳至楓橋. In *Hanshan Si Zhi*, vol. 3: "Zhi Shi." The English translation of these stanzas by Mote 1962:182)

Here for Gao Qi, the distant city walls were always viewed as clear and close, in contrast to the nearby Buddhist temple shrouded in the sunset haze, with its bell tolling distantly. Although this perception is very much in conformity with the worldly attribute of the city walls as compared to the seclusive nature of a Buddhist temple, the expression of Gao Qi's personal attachment to the city walls seems particularly strong.

There is this bird called Ding Lingwei,
Returning home at last after a thousand years away.
The city walls are as ever but the people are not the same,
Why not study immortality among graves after graves?

The ever-lasting quality of the city walls in the Chinese mind is presented here along with the same quality in the immortal and the land of his home place, as opposed to the transience of human life and society. They are portrayed, though probably unintentionally, as part of the land, and thus part of the eternal universe in which the myriad things change incessantly. Allusion was frequently made to this story in literature of later times. Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-*c.* 1685), for example, in his nostalgic reminiscence of the old Ming institutions and customs under the newly established Qing rule, deliberately uses the term *chengguo renmin* 城郭人民 (lit. "the city walls and the people") in the "Preface" of his *Taoan Mengyi*, implying the persistence of the memories of his past experiences, as resembling the permanence of the city walls, under the tide of social and political transformation.

CHAPTER 5 PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CITY

Because of the paucity of written records and city maps, little is known about the physical structure of the city of Suzhou before the Tang period, except that the city was surrounded by one circle (or perhaps two circles) of walls with eight gates in them, each catering for both road and water traffic; and that, at least from the third century onward, a double system of land and water transport may have started to take shape. We could also conjecture that a government building complex accommodating the prefectural offices, perhaps enclosed by another wall, may have been located near the centre of the city. It is from A.D. 875 onward that pieces of information about the city begin to proliferate. On the basis of the *Wudi Ji* and a number of Tang poems, for example, it is reasonable to believe that the city, its overall form being a slightly irregular rectangle, had a well developed network of street and canals, intersected by over three hundred bridges; and that it was divided, though probably unevenly, into as many as sixty residential wards which were very probably enclosed by walls and strictly controlled by the government. This second feature was common in most of the prominent cities in China until the late Tang. It has been discussed in Chapter Three that the medieval urban revolution taking place between the eighth and the twelfth centuries brought about profound change in the spatial organisation of many large cities in the economically advanced areas. The most conspicuous features of this change included the disappearance of the enclosed marketplace and the walled-ward system, and the emergence of a much freer street plan in which trade and commerce could be conducted anywhere within the city and its outlying suburbs. Suzhou was surely one of the first cities which experienced this transformation.

This chapter, divided into five sections, is concerned with the general spatial structure of the city of Suzhou. In the first, I deal with the development of the city's water and road traffic system which, together with the city walls and gates, not only determined the overall layout of the city, but also acted as a vehicle of urban space transformation from the pre-Tang era to the late imperial period. Second, I focus on the event in the 1370s which led to the permanent removal of the inner walled-enclosure as the prefectural government compound, and on its political and symbolic implications in Chinese urban history. Third, I consider the partitioning of urban space during the Ming and Qing periods, with special attention paid to the growth of the west suburbs functioning as a centre of inter-regional trade and

business. Fourth, I discuss the apparent discrepancy between the Ming and Qing scholar-officials' preoccupation with their orthodox conception of the city, and the actual development of urban economic activities in their times, and argue that their insistence on this conception reflects the persistence of the institution of the imperial city system amidst significant changes in the course of the Ming and Qing dynasties. This last argument comes to support, though from a reverse direction, my suggestion already made in section 3.3.4 that the co-existence of the tremendous urban expansion in space and the remarkable stability of the city form (defined by the city walls) in time should be explained by the characteristic way in which the city functioned, by the distinctive urban-rural relationship, and by the salient symbolic role that the city walls played in society. Fifth and finally, I conclude this chapter by summarising some of the main points that I have produced in the preceding sections.

5.1 CITY CANAL AND STREET SYSTEM

The area around the city of Suzhou has long been well-known as a land of waters (*shuiguo* 水國 or *zeguo* 澤國);[272] and the city's extensive canal network and numerous bridges account for its receiving, probably first in Europe and later in modern China, the name "the Venice of the Orient."[273] On the 1229 city map which is presented again in Figure 5-1, it is visually evident that throughout the city a double system of water and road transport prevailed, and that the canals and streets, most of them being laid out in alignment with the city walls, either intersected at right angles or paralleled each other. The total length of the canals within the city walls is estimated by Yu Shengfang (1980:16) at about eighty-two kilometres in the Southern Song period, which amounts to 78% of that of the city streets. On the basis of certain archaeological findings, Yu (ibid.) also speculates

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272 Needham (1971:211-2) holds that "the Chinese people have been outstanding among the nations of the world in their control and use of water," and that "if there was one feature of China which impressed the early modern European travellers there more than any other, it was the great abundance of waterworks and canals." The area of Suzhou was regarded by imperial scholars as the best in its beneficial availability and use of waters. (See, e.g., *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16: "Chengchi;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 2: "Xingshi")

273 Cf. Mote 1973:43 where he uses the terms "the Venice of China;" Liao and Ye 1984:359. Such an analogy, probably associated with Marco Polo's alleged visit to Suzhou in the 1280s, is certainly helpful to those Westerners who are not familiar with Suzhou for their obtaining a rough idea about what the city was like. Yet if one were to be fastidious and to compare the two cities in terms of their age, population and stability in time, one could justifiably argue that calling Suzhou "the Venice of the Orient" might be less appropriate than calling Venice "the Suzhou of the Occident."

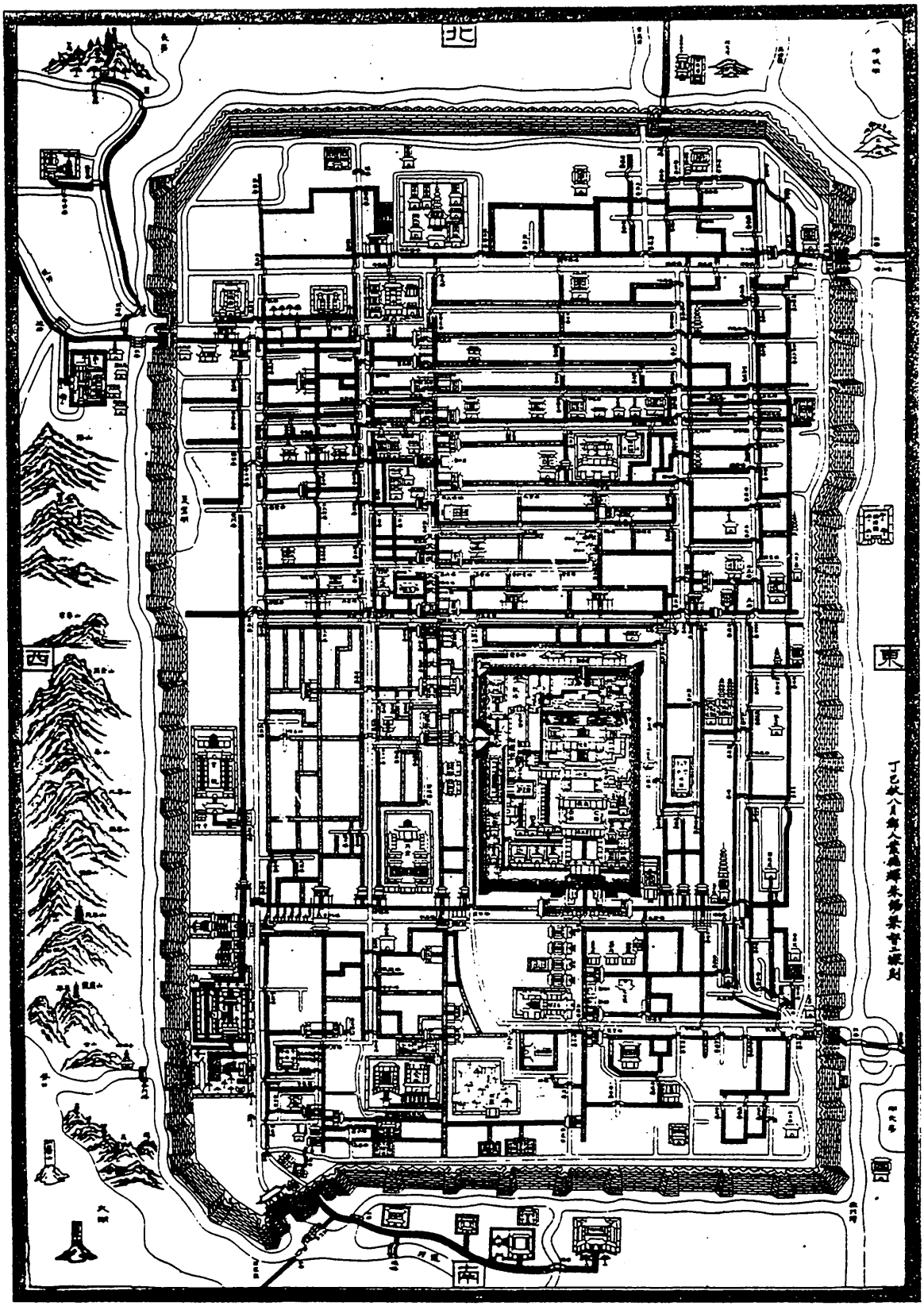

Figure 5-1 Picture map of the city of Suzhou adapted from a rubbing of the 1229 map carved on stone. (JYCGBW 1988:348)

that each canal was probably no less than ten metres in width and three to five metres in depth. Apart from the benefit of convenient daily-use, fire-fighting, water-borne transport and beautification of the landscapes, the canals figured significantly in preventing floods from overrunning the city, as they functioned in time as spillways to take care of any excess.[274] In terms of the development of urban form and space, however, this system not only characterised the overall layout of the city from the Southern Song onward, but, probably more importantly for the present research, together with the honorific gateways (*fang* 坊) and bridges, bore the marks of its formation and transformation at earlier stages.

5.1.1 The Formation of the City Canals

Few would doubt that the waterway system was the mainstay of the urban spatial structure of the city of Suzhou. Let us therefore concentrate on the city canals. In fact, this distinctive urban feature had surely been procured by the city long before the Southern Song period. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, we are informed by the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu YueChunqiu* that Helü Dacheng was constructed by Wu Zixu 伍子胥 in 514 B.C. with eight land gates and eight water gates, and that its inner walled-enclosure, *xiaocheng* 小城, also had two water gates. These seem to imply the existence at that time of multiple rivers within the city walls, although only one river is recorded in the *Yue Jue Shu*, (vol. 2) stretching from Ping Gate to She Gate and twenty-eight *bu* (approx. 40m at the Eastern Han standard) in width. The earliest record of the regulation of rivers and canals in the city was made by Zhang Shoujie 張守節, the great Tang commentator of the *Shi Ji*; he claims that Lord Chunshen (Chunshen Jun 春申君) dredged four longitudinal and five latitudinal canals north of his palace in the city in the mid-third century B.C., and that these canals continued to exist in Zhang's time. (*Shi Ji*, vol. 78: "Chunshen Jun Liezhuan," no. 18 with Zhang's commentary) If Zhang's record is reliable, it would possibly have been this water project that laid the foundation of the city's general spatial pattern, on which it developed in later times.

The city's water and road transport system may have begun to take shape, though perhaps only embryonically, at least from the second half of the third century A.D., as is revealed in Zuo Si's *Wudu Fu* already quoted in section 4.2: "Open

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274 In Suzhou the average annual rainfall is around one thousand one hundred millimetres, with forty to fifty per cent of it in summer. (Cf. WW-ZCGSY 1985:250; Cao and Wu 1986:5)

are two sets [i.e. water and road] of eight [city] gates, [connected by a network of] water ways and land routes [in the city]." By the late Tang, not only had the basic structure of the watercourses in the city - "three latitudinal and four longitudinal" arteries - become so fixed that the author of the *Wudi Ji* felt it necessary to record it in the second half of the ninth century, the structure being retained throughout subsequent history, but the canals had already been multiplied to such an extent that they became a constant theme in many Tang poems depicting the city of Suzhou of half a century earlier. During his seventeen-month period of appointment as the prefect of Suzhou from 825 to 826, Bai Juyi 白居易 once went up to Chang Gate and wrote about what he perceived of the city:

> . . .
> The city walls of Helü are emerald-green spread with autumn plants,
> The Raven Bridge is red bearing the glow of the setting sun.
> In front of storied buildings everywhere waft the melodies of flutes,
> And by the door of every house are moored ships and boats.
> . . .[275]

Similarly, in the eyes of Li Shen 李紳 (772-846) who passed by Suzhou, it was the canals and water traffic that were the representative features of the city:

> In the walls of the Wu capital city amidst mist
> Chang Gate straddles the green water streams.
> Green poplars are in the deep and shallow alleys;
> The boats decorated with carved blue birds are floating backwards and forwards.
> . . .[276]

About half of a century later, Du Xunhe 杜荀鶴 (846-*c.* 907) recalled the scenery of the city in the late Tang in a brief poem *Songren You Wu* 送人遊吳. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 691)

> Reaching Gusu 姑蘇 [i.e. Suzhou] you will see
> People's houses pillowed on the rivers.
> Within the old palatial area little land is vacant,
> Over the rivers small bridges are many.
> Water chestnut fruits and lotus roots are sold in late evening markets,
> And spring boats are loaded with luxurious silken fabrics.
> In the distance I know that wakeful under the moon,
> Homesickness will be accompanied by fishermen's songs.

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275 *Deng Changmen Xianwang* 登閶門閑望 .*Quan Tang Shu*, vol. 447.

276 *Guo Wumen Ershisi Yun* 過吳門二十四韻. *Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 481.

It is most probable that by the second half of the Northern Song period the whole network of canals in the city had already come to maturity. In 1084, for example, Zhu Changwen 朱長文, emphasising the necessity of the canals in preserving the city from flood, writes:

> As observed within the city walls, numerous [artery] streams are running through the whole area, taking in and pouring out the water from [Lake] Zhenze 震澤 [i.e. Lake Tai]. Their tributaries spread out, flanking the [city] roads and streets. Otherwise, perhaps there would be no means of discharging excessive rainwater and settling the residents adequately. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. 1: "Chengyi")

It is true that the unprecedented damage inflicted by the Jurchen cavalry on the city of Suzhou in 1130 was devastating, as Fan Chengda 范成大 states a century later, though not without a certain degree of exaggeration, that all buildings except for a couple of temples within the city walls were burnt down; (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 12: "Cimiao") but it seems unlikely that the whole existing network of the city canals was destroyed entirely at the same time. This latter statement can be verified, if only inconclusively, by comparing the record of bridges in the city contained in the *Wudi Ji Houji* 吳地記後集, compiled in the Northern Song after 1016, with those presented on the Southern Song picture map of the city carved on stone in 1229 and those contained in the gazetteer *Wujun Zhi* published in the same year. Of about one hundred bridges within the city walls[277] mentioned by name in the *Wudi Ji Houji*, which amounted to less than one third of the sum total at that time,[278] (cf. *Wudi Ji*; *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Qiaoliang") up to ninety-five per cent are also either registered in the *Wujun Zhi* or appear on the 1229 map. Although some of these remaining bridges, most of which were built of stone, (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, op.cit.)

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277 Since there are a few cases in the record where a name either simultaneously denotes two bridges or is a repetition of one already mentioned, the exact number is hard to determine.

278 There is no doubt, as the *Wudi Ji* records, that the city of Suzhou had well over three hundred bridges during the Tang period, most of them built of wood, with their banisters painted red. During his seventeen-month tenure of office as the Suzhou prefect, Bai Juyi 白居易 writes in his poem *Zhengyue Sanri Xianxing* 正月三日閑行 (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 447) that, in the city, "With red banisters are three hundred and ninety bridges." His contemporary Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 speaks otherwise of three hundred and seventy bridges when repaying Bai's courtesy with a poem. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 356) The number of the bridges must have remained similar at least, if not becoming larger as Zhu Changwen (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Qiaoliang") and another Song scholar-official Yang Bei 楊備 (see *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 17: "Qiaoliang") claim, in the Northern Song and probably throughout the centuries thereafter. By Zhu Changwen's time (1041-1089), most of the bridges had eventually come to be built of stone. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, op. cit.)

may have been repaired or even reconstructed in the 1220s, their recurrence in the 1229 document and picture map indicates a continuous existence of most of the city canals from the Northern Song to the Southern Song periods.

Thus, even if we assume that the restoration of the city walls and the repair or reconstruction of many other institutions in the 1220s were very thorough and well co-ordinated, it does not necessarily mean that the double system of water and road transport presented on the 1229 map was, as Yu Shengfang (1980:16) asserts, a brand new creation of the Southern Song, nor is Johnston's (1983:203) suggestion convincing that the whole network of canals had to be built at one and the same time at the inception of city rebuilding. Instead, the evidence presented in the preceding paragraphs suggests that the reconstruction works in the 1220s were conducted on the basis both of the existing network of canals and of the spatial pattern of the city, allowing for the addition of some new structures. In the following section, I will further propose that fundamental change in the internal spatial structure of the city of Suzhou was not so much brought about in these few years, as came gradually during the second half of the Tang and Northern Song periods - a process closely associated with the so-called "medieval urban revolution" which we have discussed in section 3.2.2.

5.1.2 City Canals and Urban Spatial Transformation

According to the *Wudi Ji*, the city during the Tang period consisted of sixty residential wards (*fang* 坊), one half of them governed by Wu county and the other half by Changzhou county; and the habitations in each ward were divided internally into about five alleys.[279] On the main gate of each of these wards, a horizontal stone-slab (*fangbiao* 坊表) was installed, on which the name of the ward was engraved. A comparison between the records contained in the *Wudi Ji* and *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 6: "Fangshi"), and the pictorial presentation on the 1229 map, suggests that these wards were not evenly distributed within the city. Figure 5-2 shows the possible disposition of the wards in the Tang, with them largely clustered around

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279 The residential wards in the city of Suzhou from the Spring and Autumn period down probably to the Han were called *li* 里, and we know from some early texts that there were Wu Li 武里, Gaoping Li 高平里 (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2) and Zhi Li 織里 (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Qiaoliang") at the time of the state of Wu, and that Chunshen Jun is said to have built the main gate of every *li* (*zhuli dahan* 諸里大閈) in the city in the mid-third century B.C. when he was enfeoffed to the Wu territory by the king of Chu. (*Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2) The *Wudi Ji* also tells us that the city contained over three hundred *xiang* 巷 (lit. "alleys in a residential ward").

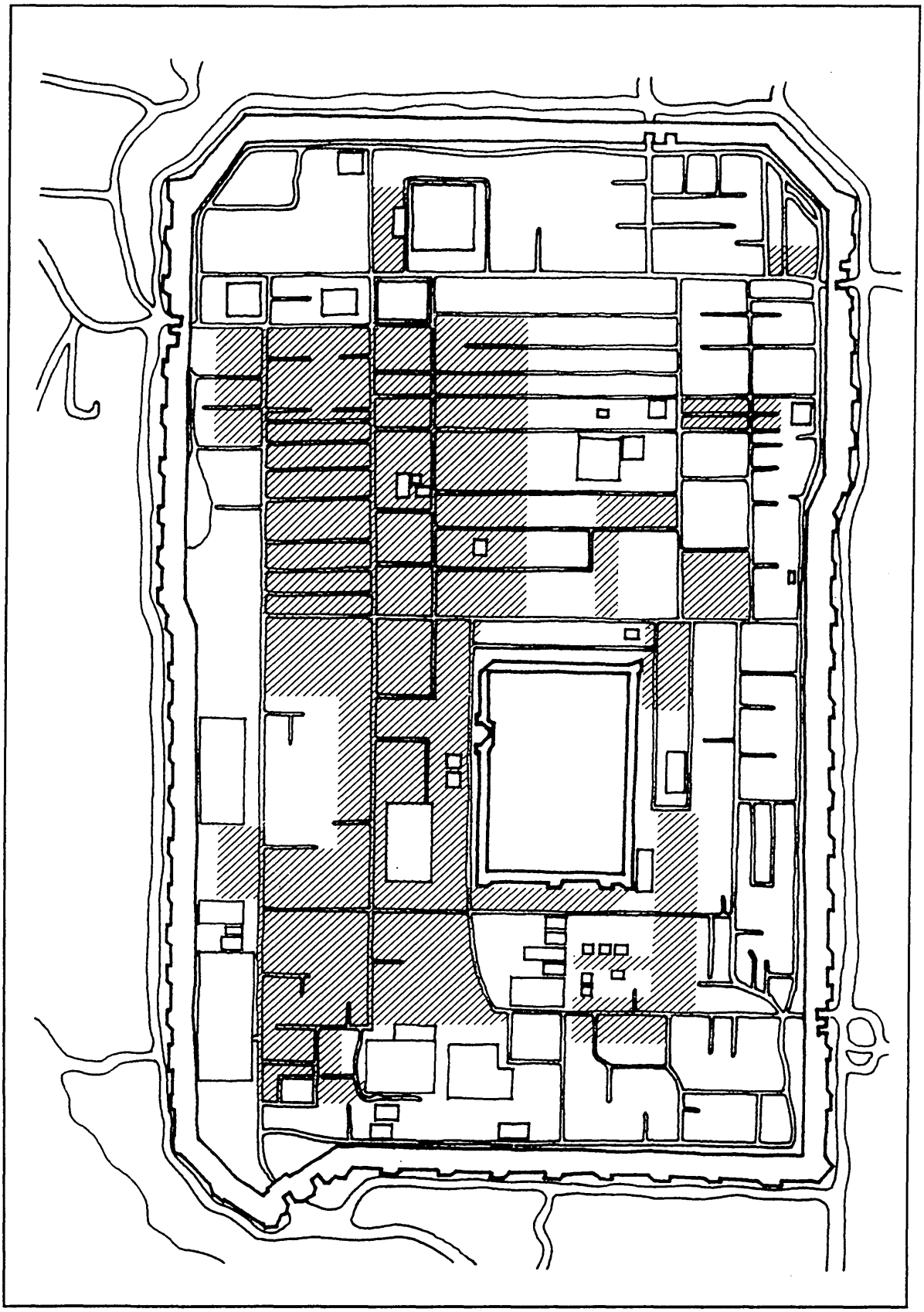

Figure 5-2 The possible disposition of the residential wards in the city of Suzhou during the Tang period. The diagrammatic map of the city is drawn on the basis of the 1229 map.

the central inner enclosure housing the prefectural seat, and the north by west and south by west parts of the city. Little information is available to us about the form of the wards and their internal organisation, but it is reasonable to conjecture that, as part of the city planning principle of the Tang, they were probably enclosed by walls and supervised by appointed officials, as were those in many other cities at that time (see section 3.2.1). On the presupposition that the general pattern of the city canal system presented on the 1229 map took shape already during the mid-Tang, I would suggest further that these residential wards, most of which were perhaps in the shape of a fairly slender rectangle, varied in size and in orientation (either north-south or east-west), as each of them occupied a specific plot of land partitioned by the canals.[280] This is evidenced, though only partly, by the 1229 map, if we are to regard some of the gateways (*fang* 坊) as remnants of the entrances of the residential wards in the early Tang.

At the latest by the early ninth century, the government control over the residential wards must have started to be relaxed. In the 820s Bai Juyi, mentioning the sixty wards in one poem,[281] tells us in another, *Deng Changmen Xianwang*, which has been quoted earlier, that "by the door of every house are moored sailing boats." Since in the city of Suzhou, canals assumed the function of traffic equivalent to that of roads, this appears to be in obvious contradiction with the stipulation of the urban system current in the early Tang that no private houses except for those of nobles were allowed to have entrances opening directly onto the city roads (see section 3.2.1); in other words, many, if not all, of the walls of the wards may have ceased bounding residences within the wards to which access had previously been controlled by their common gates. This process of change accelerated in the late Tang. In around the mid-ninth century, for example, Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (?-*c*. 881), a native of Changzhou county and a well-known late Tang writer, resided by the Lindun 臨頓 Bridge in the north-east part of the city, a place which his contemporary Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (*c*. 834-*c*. 883) described as "spacious as a

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280 It is not impossible that a few small canals may have channelled their ways *through* some of the wards which accordingly should have had appropriate water gates on their walls to control access, although there are no records of such kind of apparatus available to us. Yet the majority of the canals must have run only in between the wards so as to have functioned as routes of public transport. We do not know whether a large number of canals were dug or rearranged to be accommodated to the already established ward system, or whether instead many wards were adapted to the gradually regulated canal system. This question may be of chicken-and-egg nature in the history of the city of Suzhou, but the two systems surely must have been co-ordinated from time to time.

281 *Jiuri Yanji Zuiti Junlou Jiancheng Zhou Yin Erpan'guan*. (*Quan Tang Shi*, vol. 444) Part of this poem has been quoted in section 1.2.4.

wilderness though not without the city walls." (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Qiaoliang." Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vols. 9: "Guji" and 17: "Qiaoliang") It is clear that Lu's abode was not located within any of the sixty residential wards recorded in the *Wudi Ji*, which indicates a tendency of unrestricted choice of settlement in the city. Accompanying the relaxation of the residential ward control was a relaxation of the market control, as Du Xunhe depicts at the end of the ninth century in his poem quoted earlier, which shows how not only did "all the houses rest by rivers," but late evening markets where food and vegetables were sold - an activity then still prohibited in the imperial capital Chang'an (He 1986:210) - also became usual in the city of Suzhou.

Substantial change came during the Northern Song period (960-1126). Whereas the sixty residential wards were still recorded in the *Xiangfu Tujing* 祥符圖經, a local gazetteer compiled between 1008 and 1016 by Li Zong'e 李宗諤 but long since lost, (cf. *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Fangshi;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 6: "Fangshi") at least by the first half of the eleventh century, individuals must have been able to choose freely, provided their means allowed them to do so, the location of their abodes - either within the old wards or without. This is not only reflected in Fan Chengda's mentioning a couple of places of residence occupied in the 1020s by reference to two bridges rather than to any wards, in his listing of commendable figures in Suzhou history, (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 25: "Renwu") but also substantiated by the fact that a number of scholar-officials, travelling to Suzhou after their retirement or dismissal from office, freely purchased unoccupied plots of land in the city to build houses and gardens.[282] Probably more informative are Zhu Changwen's remarks about Suzhou's residential wards in his *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (op.cit.) written in 1084: "Recently, most of the *fang* 坊 (lit. "residential wards") and *shi* 市 (lit. "markets") have lost the gate tablets on which their names were engraved (*biaobang* 標牓), and people no longer call [these *fang* and *shi*] by their names." This statement suggests that, although the physical entities of the old residential wards at that time may still have been present, their *raison d'être* was

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282 The Poet Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008-1048), travelling to the Suzhou area in the 1040s after his dismissal from office in the imperial capital Kaifeng 開封, bought a piece of land east of the prefectural school, a long deserted spot full of small hills, ponds and lush plants, and having no houses round it, which he perceived as "not at all resembling those within the city walls." He then constructed on it the renowned private garden Canglang Ting 滄浪亭. (Cf. *Canglang Ting Ji*; *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. C: "Yuandi;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 14: "Yuanting") Similarly, Cheng Shimeng 程師孟, a native of the prefecture of Suzhou, bought an unoccupied plot east of the Buddhist Ruiguang 瑞光 Temple and built on it his own house in the first half of the eleventh century. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, op.cit.)

not.

In fact, it was during the period between the late Northern Song and the early Southern Song that the denotation of the character *fang* shifted from "residential ward" to "honorific gateway"[283] - a semantic change that signified the complete replacement of the ward system with the system of streets and alleys, and thus the fundamental transformation of spatial organisation in the city of Suzhou. The result of this transformation is manifested both on the 1229 city map and in the *Wujun Zhi*. We may recall the contrast, presented in Figures 3-10 and 3-11 in section 3.2.2, between a section of the city plan of Tang dynasty Chang'an where plots of land were demarcated by the walls of the residential wards, and that of the Southern Song dynasty Suzhou, characterised by its parallel streets and canals which determined the intramural space. During the Tang and the first half of the Northern Song, each of Suzhou's sixty residential wards, which may to some extent have been equivalent to those of Chang'an, was itself as a whole called a *fang*; but probably from the late Northern Song onward, it was any of these honorific gateways, most of them located at the threshold of an old ward but now simply symbolising a neighbourhood or its entrance, that the word denoted.

Evidence of this change is found in the *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 6: "Fangshi") in two directions. On the one hand, under the entry of many a *fang*, a *xiang* 巷 (lit. "alley") is written indicating the location of the *fang* in question. One should note that, since prior to the late Northern Song the character *xiang* denoted "an alley *within* a

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283 Liu Zhiping (1987:43) classifies, in terms of decorative styles, the symbolic gateways of wood or stone in traditional China into two types. One was *paifang* 牌坊, formed only with beams set between the two (or four if it was three-span, or six if five-span) columns; the other was *pailou* 牌樓, characterised by carrying on its columns a roof (or roofs) with the whole set of structural elements in exactly the same way as that of a building, including, especially, the corbel brackets (*dougong* 斗栱). Those *fang* portrayed on the *Pingjiang Tu* are all of the second type. Needham, (1971:69, 142) on the basis of the works of some Western scholars before him, insists that this kind of structure, "the triumphal gateway" as he calls it, derived from the Indian *torana*, familiar from Sanchi at which four of them surround the first-century B.C. *dagoba* or *tope*, facing the quarters of the world. Liu Zhiping, (op.cit. 42) however, holds that it had its source in ancient China itself and originated from both the *hengmen* 衡門, "a kind of gates with a timber crossbar," as Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645) explains it, (*Han Shu*, vol. 73: "Zhuan," no. 43: "Xuan Cheng" with Yan's commentary) and the *huabiao* 華表, a kind of ceremonial column probably developed from the archaic totemic pillars marking each of the specific tribes. Whatever the truth of the matter - whether it be a gift from Indian to Chinese architecture, or the outcome of a slow intrinsic evolution, the supersession of the gates of residential wards by honorific gateways, from the late Northern Song to the early Southern Song, was undoubtedly one the emblematic aspects of the process of medieval urban transformation in Suzhou.

residential ward," a *fang* here could mean just a gateway straddling a street or alley. On the other hand, from the texts available to us concerning the city of Suzhou, we understand that Fan Chengda, the author of the *Wujun Zhi*, was the first scholar to have used, though still but occasionally, the verb "to erect" (*li* 立) in recording the building of a new *fang*, a word which is more pertinent to setting up a gateway than a walled residential ward, whereto the verbs *jian* 建 and *zuo* 作 (both literally meaning "build" or "construct") are more appropriate, this being the way in which they were constantly used before Fan's time.[284] This semantic change in the character *fang* registers in itself a gradual urban institutional change which led to the fundamental transformation of urban spatial organisation from the late Tang to the early Southern Song periods.

Yet I should emphasise two points that have been developed thus far. The first is a slight digression from, but pertinent to, the main subject of this section. The *fang*, i.e. the honorific gateways, presented as independent structures on the 1229 city map, originated from the gates of the old residential wards. It was customary until the Northern Song that, in Suzhou, as in all other cities in China, an honorific name was often conferred by the government on a specific residential ward in honour of the commendable deeds of its individuals or families.[285] This name was then engraved on a stone which was incorporated officially into the gate of the ward - an act known as *biaolü* 表閭. (See, e.g., CY IV 1983:2814) The eventual replacement of the ward system by the system of streets and alleys in the early Southern Song, however, did not lead to the cessation of this custom. On the contrary, this practice was freed from the locational limitation concomitant with the establishment of the wards, as we find that the number of *fang* was increased to sixty-five by Li Shoupeng in 1229. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 6: "Fangshi") From the Ming period onward, if not earlier, more honorific gateways than ever before were

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284 Even when mentioning that the sixty-five *fang* in 1229 were the works of the prefect Li Shoupeng 李壽朋, Fan Chengda still uses the verb *zuo* (lit. "build" or "construct"). In almost all of the local gazetteers from the Ming onward, however, the verb *li* (lit. "erect") is invariably used in the records of the building of *fang* in later times. More interesting is that Lu Xiong 盧熊 of the early Ming, in his *Suzhoufu Zhi* compiled in the late fourteenth century, first argues that *fang* in antiquity meant "residential wards," and then, on the basis of Fan Chengda's record, as many others have done in their writings, refers to the 1229 event, but replaces the verb *zuo* with *li*. (See quotation in SPCK, section preceding vol. 1. Cf. *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 5: "Fangxiang") This reveals Lu's and others' acute understanding of the change in the denotation of the character *fang*.

285 There were also cases in which the name of a ward derived from a historic or legendary event. Yet it was because a *fang* was often set up in later times to honour an individual or family's praised moral or righteous conduct that it is now loosely translated as an "honorific gateway."

erected.[286] The historic process of the transformation of the *fang* from the residential walled-wards, to the symbolic gateways leading to their corresponding residential blocks that were no longer under strict government control, and then to the honorific gateways largely free of any locational restraint, was generated by, and at the same time reflected, the process of change in the physical structure of the city.

The second point is more central to the present discussion. Whereas the transformation of urban spatial organisation, generated principally by the "medieval urban revolution," proves to have been substantial and far-reaching, in Suzhou it was largely within the framework of the existing urban physical structure developed over centuries that this transformation took place. It is very possible that this framework initially took the position of the city walls and gates as its starting point provided either by the construction of Helü Dacheng in 514 B.C. or by entire city rebuilding - if there was any - in the pre-Tang era. It is certainly true that the geometrically regulated spatial structure of many cities in China, especially those on the North China Plain, was pre-determined at the inception of their construction. This should not, however, be taken as a universal model to be applied to explaining every Chinese city which evinced such a spatial character, since there were cities of seemingly regular design, whose street pattern, river courses, residential quarters, etc., were jointly a physical outcome of gradual urban development through the centuries. The city of Suzhou was undoubtedly one of them.

I am not entirely sure whether the relatively even quality (though not quantity) of the urban environment over the entire city can be attributed to the

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286 In his *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 12: "Fangbiao"), for example, Gu Zhentao 顧震濤 (1750-?) lists over two hundred honorific gateways erected in and around the city of Suzhou from the Ming period to his time. Two notable changes characterised these activities: (1) unlike that in the Southern Song, the erection of many gateways was financed and conducted by local gentry or wealthy individuals, rather than solely by the local government, and (2) the location of the new gateways was no longer limited to the area enclosed by the city walls but extended to the rural areas. Taking the record in the *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 5: "Fangxiang") of the building of *fang* in Wu, Changzhou and Yuanhe counties, the seats of all of which were located in the city of Suzhou, we find that not only were more of the new gateways erected during the Ming and Qing periods by local gentry and wealthy individuals than by government officials, but about 29% of them were located either in the suburbs or in the more distant areas of the countryside. These changes, in fact, came entirely in concurrence with social developments in late imperial China, i.e. further relaxation of government controls over social and economic activities, and increased ties between the city and countryside.

application of what Hackett (1950:91) calls the "inherent" method of building cities which, because of the constant cultural ideal in China's long-lasting civilisation, "might well develop naturally in a regular manner without very much of the preliminary thought or decision of a drafted town plan." What I can suggest with some degree of certainty is that, during the period between the beginning of the Tang (or probably even earlier) and the late Northern Song, the network of the city canals was gradually forged in co-ordination with the division of the city area into the residential wards, the walled market quarters, and government offices and other institutions, which could be regarded as a spatial manifestation of the "classical" urban social organisation. Precisely in the second half of this period, i.e. from the late Tang to the late Northern Song, the fundamental change in the internal spatial structure of the city was in progress. Thus it was not only at the time when the old residential ward system was prevalent, but also through the process of its gradual collapse, that the network of city canals eventually came to shape. The formation of this network assisted the spatial arrangement of the residential wards (and the walled markets) as much as it in time helped their disintegration; and at the same time, it was itself the outcome of the establishment of the physical ward system as much as the consequence of the collapse of this system epitomising the medieval urban spatial transformation.

5.1.3 City Canals in the Late Imperial Period

Whereas the earliest record of Suzhou's hydraulic works in the imperial era dates back to the Qin dynasty at the end of the third century B.C., frequent and extensive projects started from the early Tang in the first half of the seventh century; and more projects were conducted during the Song period, which were accompanied by a multitude of books, discourses and memoirs on local water conservancy. Yet among all the relevant documents available to us, no record of such schemes on the canals within the city walls, except the dredging of the Jinfan Jing 錦帆涇 in co-ordination with that of the Grand Canal in the west suburbs in 1217 and the 1370s, is found before the mid-Ming in 1493.[287] From then on, however, a total of sixteen such undertakings in the city are recorded up to 1890, which I list in chronological order in Table 5-1. At first sight, the frequent work on regulating the city canals in the course of the last two dynasties seems impressive. Yu

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287 Cf., e.g., *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. C: "Zhishui;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 19: "Shuili;" *Gusu Zhi*, vols. 11 and 12: "Shuili," A and B; *Ye Ji*, vol. 1; *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vols. 9-11: "Shuili," 1-3; and *Wuxian Zhi*, vols. 42 and 43: "Shuili," 1 and 2.

Table 5-1 Chronological record of canal-dredging works in the city of Suzhou during the Ming and Qing periods

Dynastic period	Year	Canal-dredging work
Ming (1368-1644)	1370s	dredging of one artery canal, Jinfan Jing
	1493	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1522	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1525	dredging of seven sections of the city canals
	1606	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1617	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1630	dredging of the canals in front of the Wu county offices
Qing (1644-1911)	1709	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1722	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1728	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1739	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1746	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1796-1797	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1835	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1864	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1873	whole-scale canal-dredging
	1890	whole-scale canal-dredging

Source: *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*, vol. 10: "Shuizhi;" *Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 1; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vols. 10 and 11: "Shuili," nos. 2 & 3; *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 43: "Shuili," no. 2.

Shengfang, (1986:38) for instance, asserts that it indicates the satisfactory accomplishment of the Ming and Qing government's task of maintaining the canal system of the city - an assessment made by equally dividing the period from 1368 to 1890 by fourteen,[288] i.e. a comprehensive dredging of the city canals every thirty-seven years on average. Setting the question of the validity of such an appraisal aside,[289] a closer look at this information, in conjunction with an analysis of the contemporary city maps, otherwise reveals a more complex and interesting situation in the process of city development in the late imperial period.

Let us start with the Ming period. From 1229 in the Southern Song onward,[290] there are no recorded works of the regulation of the city canals until the mid-Ming. If we are to ignore partial works in 1525 and 1630, there were only four instances of whole-scale canal-dredging in a span of one and a half centuries from 1493 to the end of the Ming, two of them occurring closely around the turn of the sixteenth century and the other two in the early seventeenth century. The layout of the city canals in the late Ming is presented in detail in the city map (see Figure 5-3) contained in Zhang Guowei's *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*, (vol. 7: "Hexing") the production of which was based on the result of the official survey carried out between 1567 and 1619. It seems more likely that the survey was part of the two canal-dredging works in the early seventeenth century, than that it was a separate act before or after that time. In any event, a comparison between the 1229 map (Figure 5-1) and the late Ming map (Figure 5-3) demonstrates that almost every canal presented on the former reappears on the latter, and that some of the unattached canals on the former, especially those in the north-east and, to a lesser degree, the south-west quarters, are shown to have been connected up. Thus the water courses within the city walls in the late Ming were probably slightly longer in total than those in the Southern Song. In fact, the canal system displayed on the late Ming map is the most extensive among those on all other maps of the city of

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288 Yu holds that there were fourteen recorded canal-dredgings during this period of time. Whether this results from his intentional exclusion of the two instances of partial work (1525 and 1630) or from his omission of certain pieces of information, I do not know.

289 An appraisal of the local efforts at regulating the city canals during a certain period of time demands not only an analysis of the whole set of political, social and economic conditions, but also a comparative assessment between the effectiveness of the actions taken by the local government or groups in response to this set of conditions during this particular period, and that in other times and places.

290 It is reasonable to assume that the reconstruction of the city in the 1220s was accompanied by extensive canal-dredging, although no written record of this has been found so far.

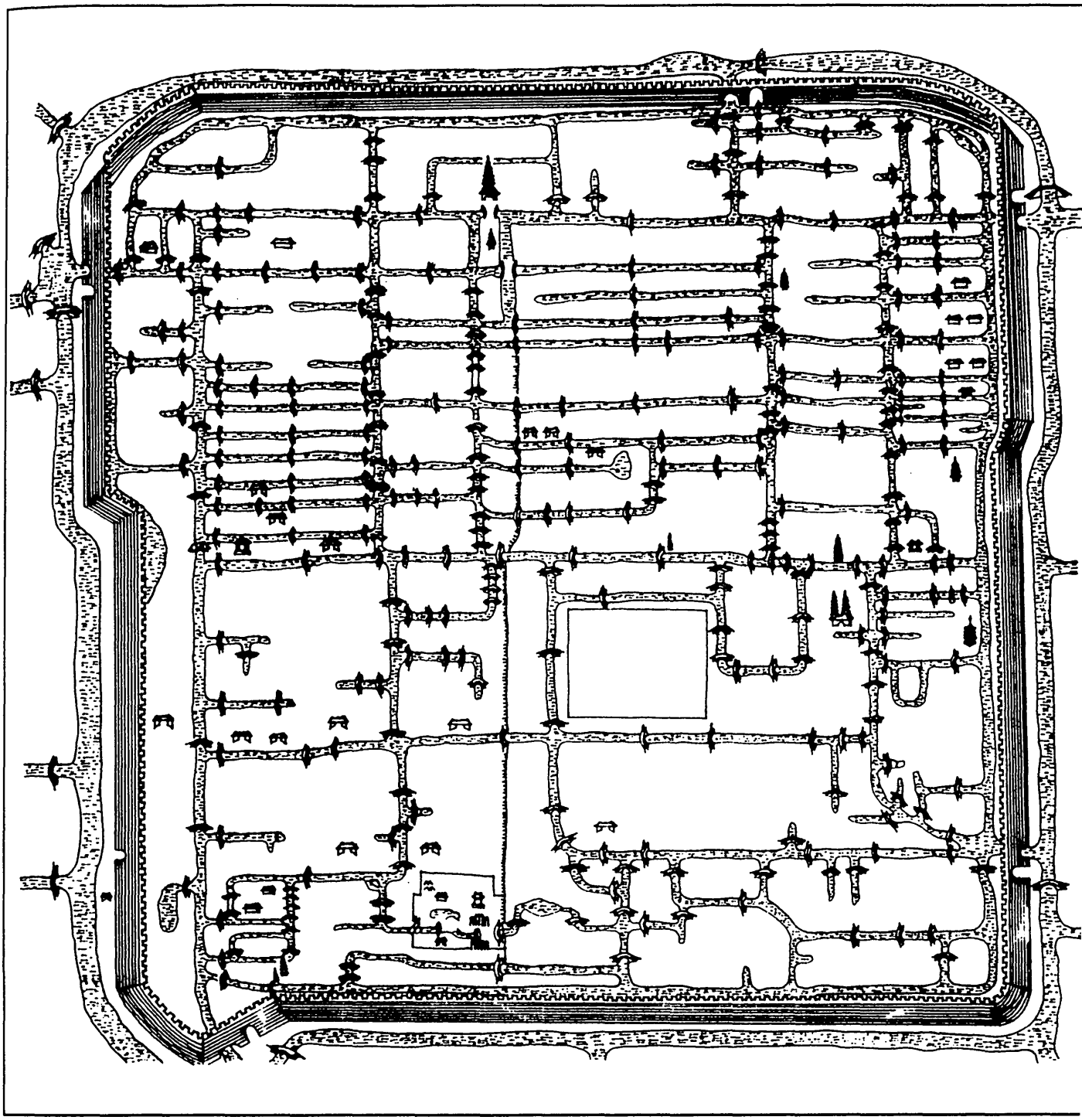

Figure 5-3 Picture map of the city of Suzhou at the end of the Ming in the mid-seventeenth century. Redrawn from the map contained in Zhang Guowei's *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*.

Suzhou from 1229 to the present day. Does this indicate that more attention was paid to the canals in the Ming, or that the efforts at attending to them were more effective? Probably both. Yet it would be more interesting in the present discussion to ask whether the well maintained or even improved city canal system in the late Ming suggests something more of the urban economic and social conditions than of the effectiveness of the local government in its attending to the canals. To deal with this last question, we have to move on to the Qing period.[291]

Turning back to Table 5-1, there is no record of whole-scale canal-dredging for the period of some two hundred and sixty years from 1229 to 1493. If the written records are largely reliable,[292] one is tempted to conjecture at first sight of the data that the local government in the early Qing may have been more conscious of the maintenance of the city canal system than that in the early Ming, because not only was such a work conducted in 1709, only sixty-five years after the political upheaval of the change of dynasty, a sharp contrast with the interval of one hundred and twenty-five years from the beginning of the Ming in 1368, but thereafter four more instances immediately followed. When these data are checked more carefully against the contemporary city maps, however, a somewhat more interesting story unfolds. Table 5-1 shows that, in the last two hundred and sixth-eight years of the imperial era, six out of ten instances of whole-scale canal-dredging occurred in the eighteenth century alone, while five of them were concentrated within a period of thirty-eight years in the first half of that century. It was precisely at the end of this period that the result of a dramatic loss of over a quarter of the canals within the city walls is presented on the city map (Figure 5-4) contained in the 1748 prefectural gazetteer. The damage to certain sections of the city canals must have been gradual and probably started from the mid-seventeenth century or some later date.

What, then, does this tell us? As has been introduced in Chapter One, Suzhou rose to prominence as what Skinner (1977a:17) calls "the regional metropolis"

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291 It should be emphasised that this discussion following the sequence of dynasties does not imply cutting up the history of canal-regulation in the city of Suzhou into dynastic slices, although dynastic cycles at times did exert tremendous influence on local conditions and resources.

292 Since records of a number of water-control projects outside the city from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries appear in the same sources, it seems possible that the instances of the dredging of the city canals, if any, may not have been judged by the contemporary local historians as on a scale that was so significant as to deserve being recorded.

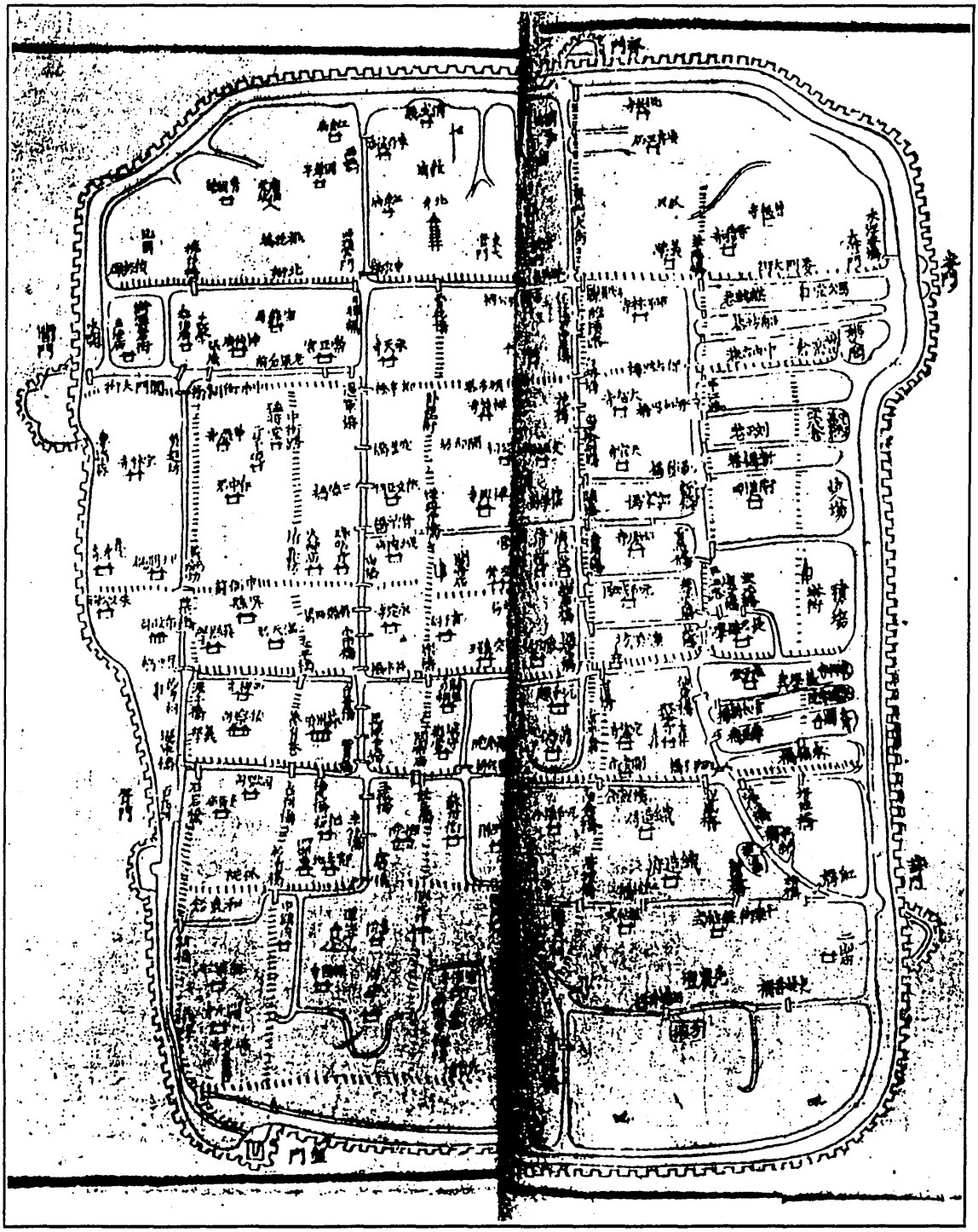

Figure 5-4 Map of the city of Suzhou contained in the 1748 *Suzhoufu Zhi*. (LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986 [page not numbered])

from the early sixteenth century. The physical impact of this economic growth on the city water courses may not have been felt until the second half of the seventeenth century, when encroachment made by houses and other structures upon many of the canals started to pose a serious problem.[293] (*Chongjun Suzhou Chenghe Ji*) Thus it seems reasonable to argue that the unusual frequency of the enterprises of canal-dredging in the first half of the eighteenth century - once in less than every eight years on average - was really part of a forced reaction of the local government to the tremendous pressure of urban growth on the city area, especially on those parts which were economically and demographically most sensitive. This argument wins more support when we compare the 1748 city map (Figure 5-4) with that of the late Ming (Figure 5-3), identifying the areas where the canals were obviously blocked up in the mid-eighteenth century. In order for the reader to see more clearly, I have shaded those areas on a diagrammatic plan of the city in Figure 5-5. Apart from the far north-east corner where the loss of a few canals probably resulted from negligence, it was the quarters in the business district close to Chang Gate in the north-west, and in the west part of the district of family-based textile industry adjacent to the business district, that experienced significant loss of canals.

Many of these areas had long been densely populated from the Tang onward and pressures on them must have increased dramatically since the mid-seventeenth century, while others which were scarcely occupied until the early eighteenth century rapidly developed within a period of a century into the most bustling places. The area south of the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan 玄妙觀 was such an example. Zhang Zilin 張紫琳, an eighteenth-to-nineteenth-century native of Changzhou, speaks in his *Honglan Yisheng* 紅蘭逸乘 (vol. 1: "Guji") of the density of houses and the boisterousness of daily life in that area south of the temple, in constrast to the words of another local scholar a century before him that "few residences were located here during the Kangxi 康熙 reign-period (1662-1722), and what I saw by standing on the [Suijin 碎錦][294] Bridge was the derelict site of Zhang [Shicheng]'s palaces overspread with wild grasses." The major achievement of the efforts exerted between 1709 and 1746 may therefore be regarded as having

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293 This problem may have been aggravated in the eighteenth century by a sharp increase in Suzhou's population, which coincided with an increase of the nation-wide population to unprecedented levels.

294 The street in front of Xuanmiao Guan, known from the Qing to the present day as Guanqian 觀前 Street, was formerly called Suijin Street. Thus the bridge in front of the main entrance of the temple was sometimes called Suijin Bridge, although its proper name was Gong 宮 Bridge in the Song and Ming, and Guan 觀 Bridge in the Qing.

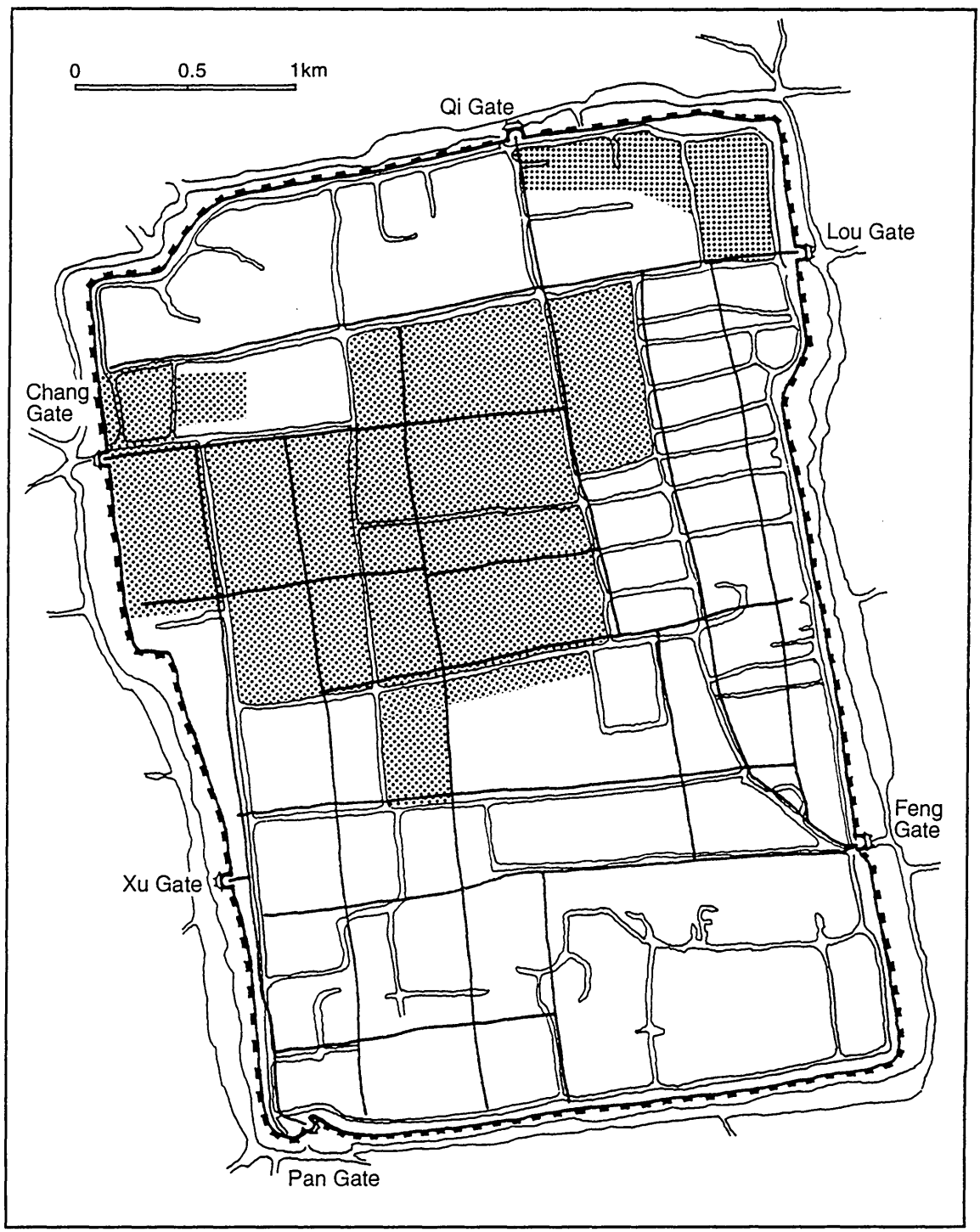

Figure 5-5 The areas (in shade) within the city walls having experience dramatic loss of canals by 1748.

reduced the damage of the entirely city canals to the minimum possible.

The problem of the steady decay of the city canals continued in the second half of the eighteenth century. The accumulated damage was such that in 1795, in the eyes of Fei Chun 費淳, the provincial governor who inspected the whole city, "over half of the four longitudinal and three latitudinal water courses were silted or clogged; and the water flow of other small rivers has stopped, some of them having become level land." (*Chongjun Suzhou Chenghe Ji*) This prompted the more complete project started in the eighth month of 1796 and finished in the fifth month of the following year, at the cost of over 21,596 taels of silver collected principally from private donations rather than government sponsorship. The total length of the canals dredged this time amounts to over 25.237km, and over 76,026 cubic metres of earth were moved. (Ibid.; *Sujun Chenghe Sanheng Sizhi Tushuo*) Although it became impossible for this project to restore the remaining canals to the Ming standard,[295] its success was undeniable: if the undertakings in the first half of the eighteenth century were ironically greeted with the massive loss of the water courses, this one, followed by those in the ensuing century, effectively prevented the network from deteriorating. Comparing the 1797 and 1883 city maps (Figures 5-6 and 5-7) and the two produced at the turn of the twentieth century (Figures 5-8 and 5-9) with the 1748 map (Figure 5-4), we find that, apart from the disappearance of two or three small canals by the east city wall, there were no further significant losses in 1797 or thereafter until the end of the Qing.

It is not certain whether these works were conducted more thoroughly, or the attendant control of the canals was tighter, or the pressure of the economic and population growth on the city area became less heavy as a new equilibrium may have been reached at this stage of urban development. Probably all the three factors jointly contributed to this result. My concluding point, however, is that both the pictorial record of the city canals and the written record of the canal-dredging works do not merely reveal how many efforts were made to maintain or improve the city water system and whether these efforts were effective. They also tell us that the geometrically regulated pattern of the water courses during the Southern Song

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295 The official figure obtained during the period between 1567 and 1619 for the width of the city canals ranges from about 6.4m to 12.8m. (*Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*, vol. 7: "Hexing") Yet even after the 1796 canal-dredging, as Sheng Linji 盛林基 (*Sujun Chenghe Sanheng Sizhi Tushuo*) acknowledged in 1797, the average width of the canals had been halved and their full width was impossible to restore.

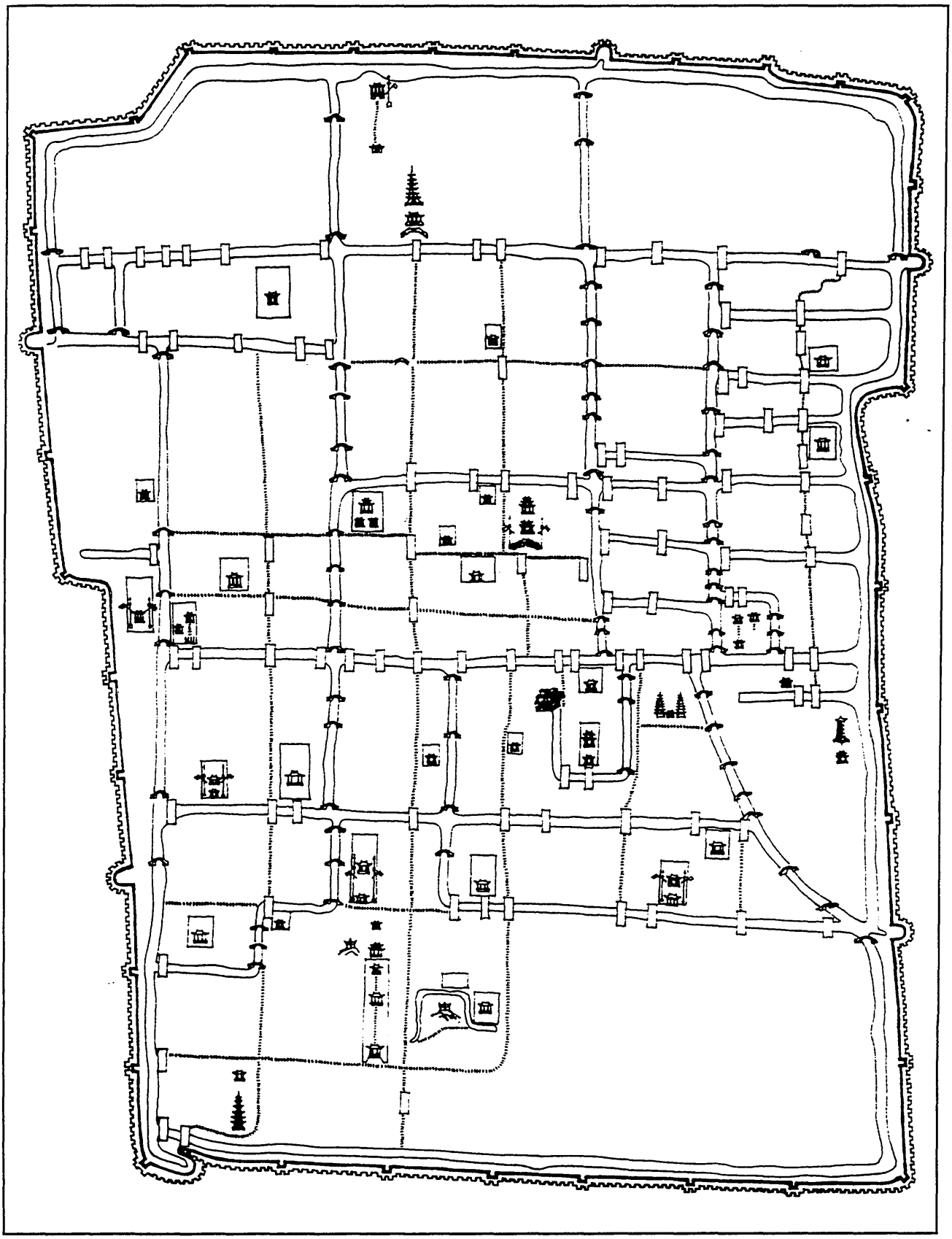

Figure 5-6 Picture map of the city of Suzhou adapted from the map carved on stone in 1797.

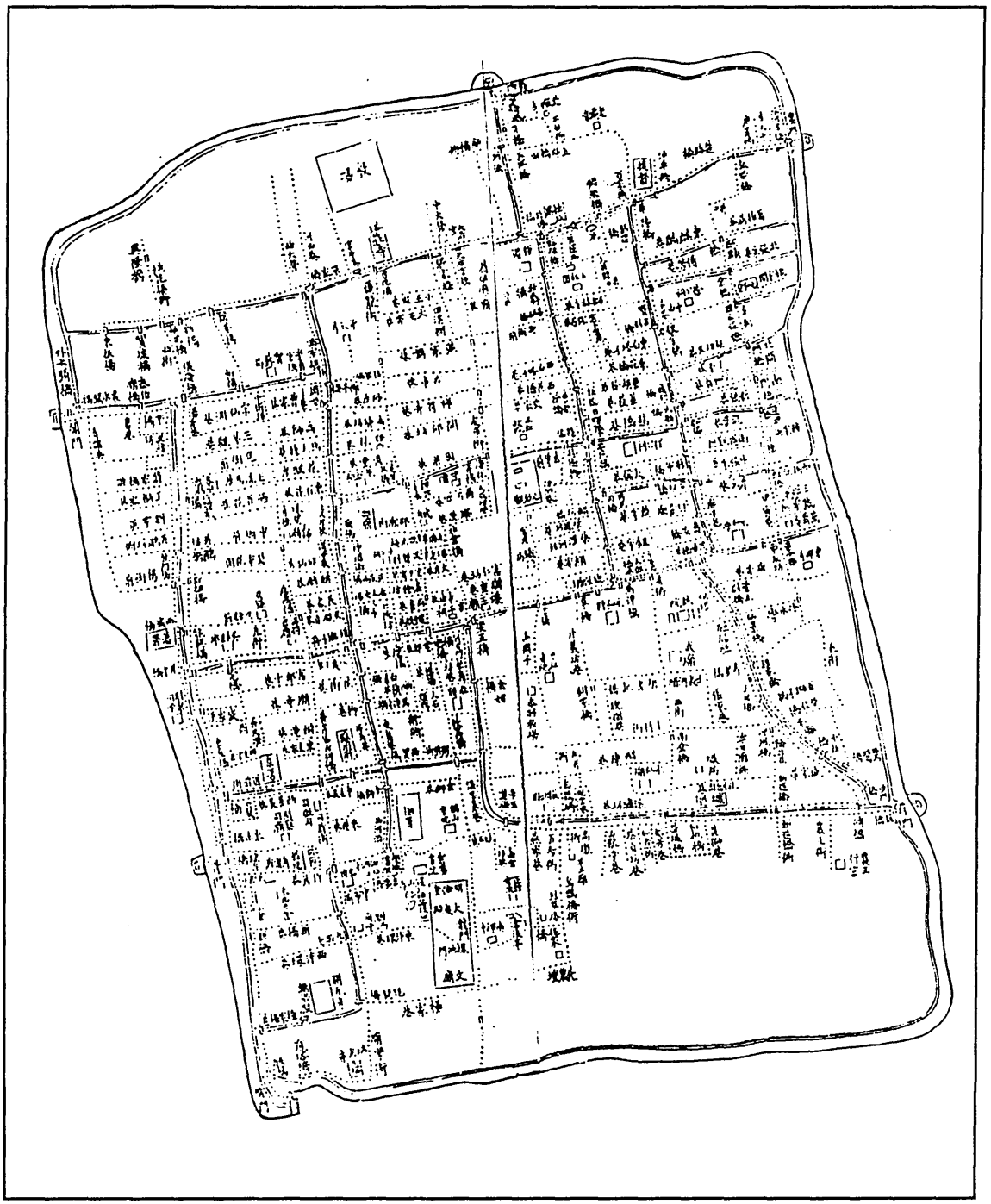

Figure 5-7 Map of the city of Suzhou contained in the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi* ("Sucheng Quantu").

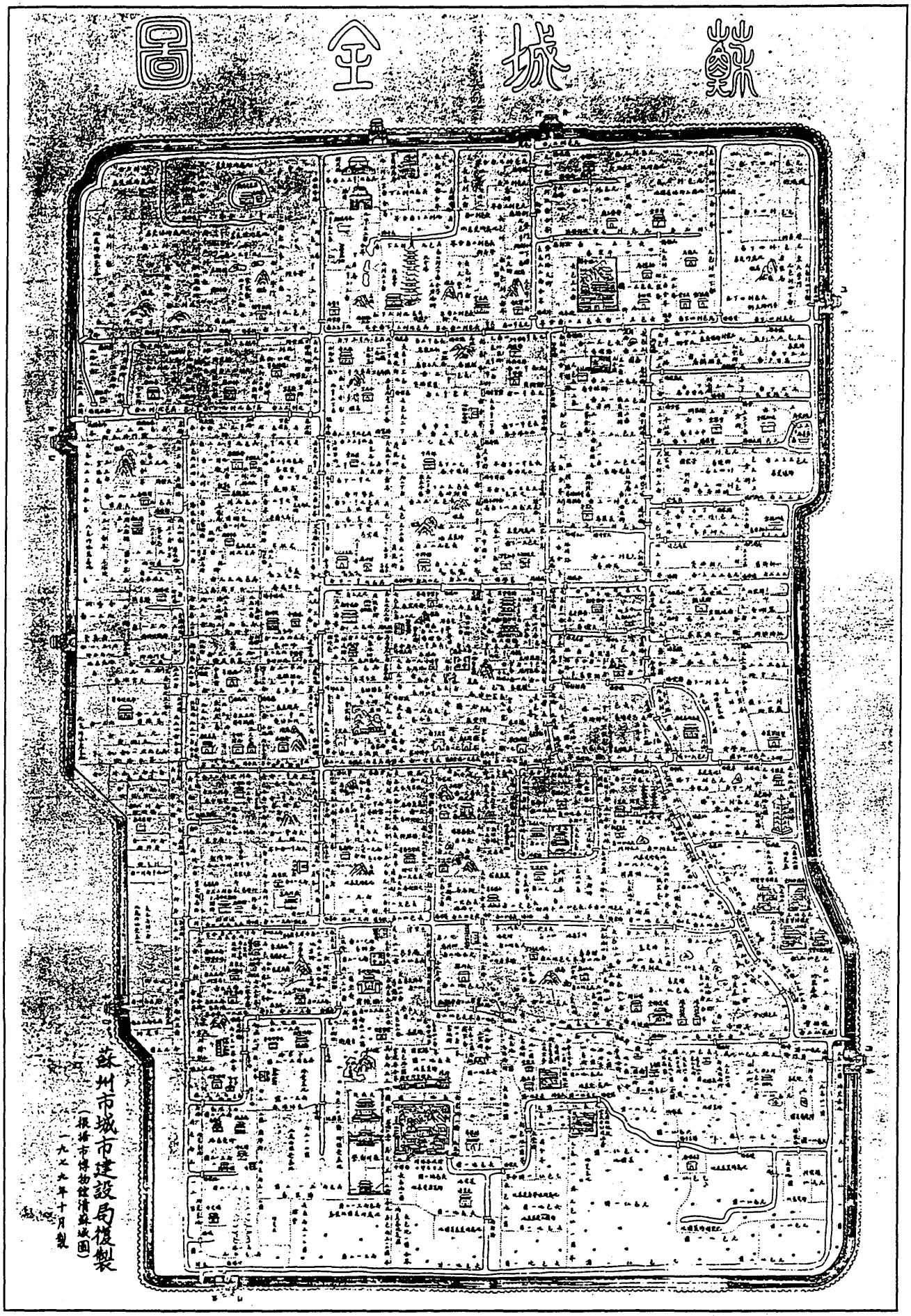

Figure 5-8 Picture map entitled *Sucheng Quantu* 蘇城全圖 (lit. "A Complete Map of the City of Suzhou"). Author unknown; produced between 1883 and 1901. Courtesy of the Committee of Suzhou Urban and Rural Construction.

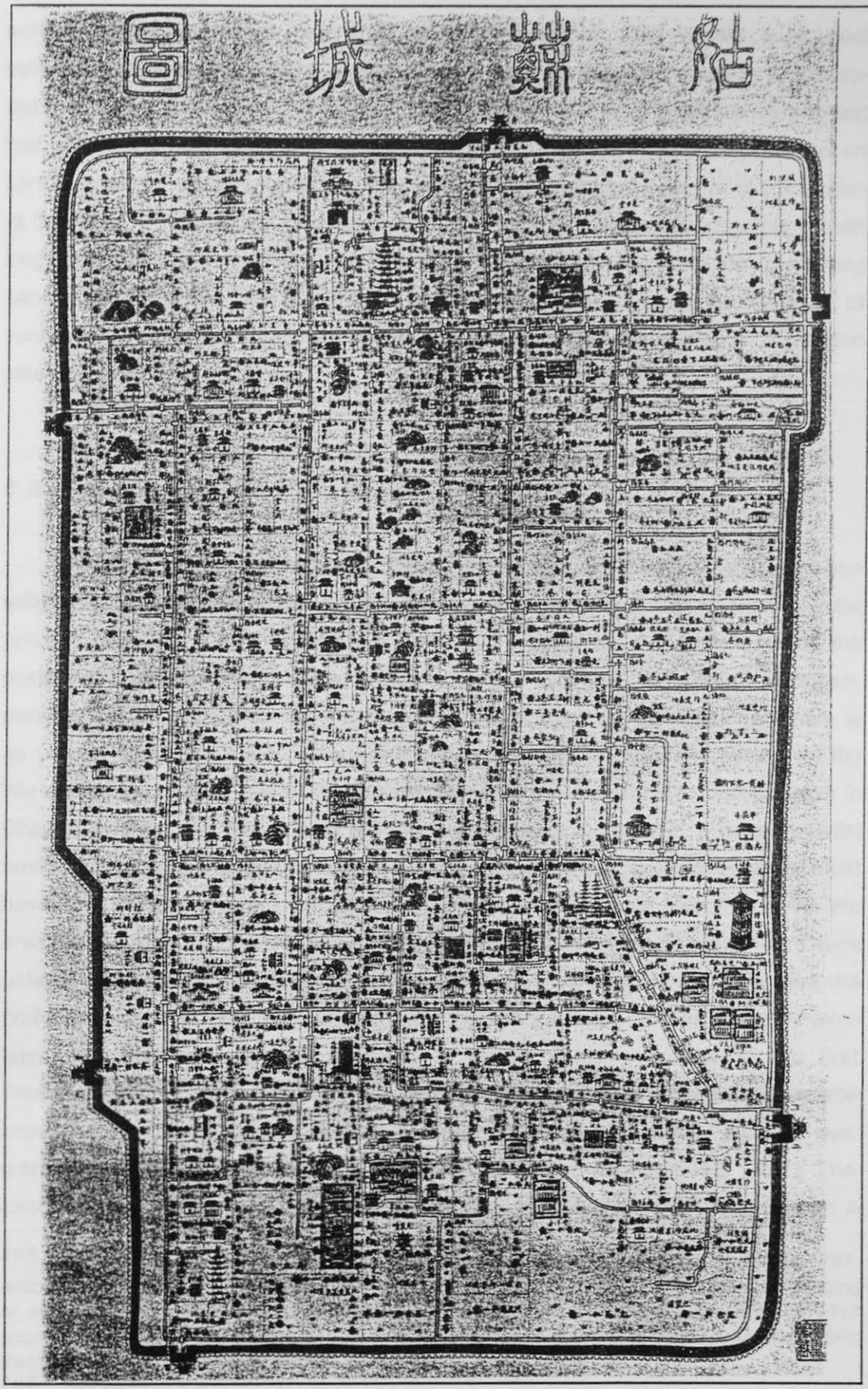

Figure 5-9 Picture map entitled *Gusu Chengtu* 姑蘇城圖 (lit. "City Map of Gusu [Suzhou]"). Author unknown; produced between 1883 and 1901. Adapted from Liu 1995:plate 35.

period, gradually formed over the preceding centuries, was largely a physical outcome of strict government control over city residences and markets which co-ordinated with their development; that the massive loss of the canals in the first half of the eighteenth century probably resulted from the enormous pressure on certain areas of the city, brought about by the unprecedented upsurge of population at that time, the relaxation of government control[296] and the rapid economic growth beginning from the mid-Ming onward; and that the sustaining of the remaining canals thereafter until the early twentieth century reflects a considerable ease of such pressure and the attainment of a new balance between the economy, population situation and urban land use.

5.2 THE GEOMETRICAL CENTRE OF THE CITY

Whereas by the end of the Northern Song the medieval urban revolution had substantially transformed the overall spatial structure of the city of Suzhou, one principal element, the inner walled-enclosure at the centre of the city housing the prefectural government offices, which was part of the old urban institution, persisted for another two and a half centuries. The origin of this inner enclosure is as yet not clear, but it may have some connection with the planning system of the Wu capital built at the end of the sixth century B.C. I have come to a conclusion in Chapter Two that the central area of Helü Dacheng was occupied by a walled palatial enclosure (*xiaocheng*) of the king of Wu. By 248 B.C., this building complex must have long been dilapidated, because as Lord Chunshen[297] was enfeoffed in the Wu area by the king of Chu, he had to build his palaces anew in the city.[298] These palatial structures with some later additions became the prefectural offices and the prefects' residence from the Qin period on into the Eastern Han and probably even later, with the exception that in 201 B.C. Liu Jia 劉賈, a brother of the first Western Han emperor Liu Bang 劉邦 (256-195 B.C.), built a new walled palace known as the Dingcuo Cheng 定錯城 to the north of the *xiaocheng*, after he was granted the title of Jing Wang 荊王 (lit. "the king of the Jing [region]). (Ibid.) The exact location of the new palatial complex built in 248 B.C. has always been a

296 Even in the process of the whole-scale city canal-dredging between 1796 and 1797, according to Fei Chun, the government did not simply tear down all the houses overhanging or encroaching the canals, but by "weighing up public convenience and individual benefit," accordingly cleared the canals of those which appeared most inconvenient to the public transport system. (*Chongjun Suzhou Chenghe Ji*)

297 See section 1.2.

298 *Shi Ji*, vol. 78: "Chunshen Jun Liezhuan," no. 18; cf. *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2.

matter of dispute.[299] However, whatever the case may have been, descriptions of certain official buildings contained in Tang poems and Song documents tell us that a wall-enclosed complex housing the prefectural seat had already been located at the centre of the city during the Tang period (A.D. 618-891), if not earlier. Thus I agree with Liu Dunzhen's suggestion (1980:168) that during the Southern Song period the inner walled-enclosure shown on the 1229 picture map *Pingjiang Tu* was in general merely a reconstruction with a few alterations on the exact site of its predecessors.[300]

This inner enclosure of the Southern Song, shown in Figure 5-10 (cf. Figure 5-1), was much smaller in scale than that at the time of Helü Dacheng, if the *Yue Jue Shu*'s record of its measurements at twelve *li* (approx. 5.08km) in perimeter is reliable. (See section 2.3.2) By comparing the architectural features and by reference to their names as shown in the city maps of the Southern Song, Ming and late Qing, we can reasonably contend that the north side of the walls of the inner enclosure in the Southern Song period should have been around present-day Zhangguolao 張果老 and Qiangengzi 前埂子 Alleys, the west side around Jinfan 錦帆 Road, the south side around Shizi 十梓 Street, and the east side around Gongyuan 公園 Road. This amounts to the perimeter of this rectangular area being only about 2,100 metres (approx. 450m x 600m). Thus the area enclosed within the walls of the inner enclosure was certainly not, as Johnston claims, (1983:215) slightly larger than the area of the Forbidden City of the Ming and Qing dynasties Beijing, but only a little over a quarter of it.[301]

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299 According to Zhang Shoujie 張守節 of the Tang, a commentator of the *Shi Ji*, Lord Chunshen "constructed in the city another walled structure to the north-west of the *xiaocheng* and resided in it." This proposition is accepted by Qu Yingjie (1991:221-2) who further suggests that the Dingcuo Cheng built in 201 B.C. might also have been located on the site of Lord Chunshen's palace. Yet more scholars seem to have preferred the proposition that Lord Chunshens palace was built on the site of the *xiaocheng*, which, later usually known as *zicheng* 子城 (lit. "inner walled-enclosure"), continued to be used as the site of the prefectural offices until the end of the Yuan in the 1360's. (Cf., e.g., *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Zhou Zhai," A; *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 6: "Guan Yu;" *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu;" Wen 1988:55-6)

300 Since a very large number of Tang poems were associated with various architectural structures in the government building complex, a full reference to them appears to be unnecessary here. Suffice it for the reader to refer to *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 6: "Guanyu" where some of the poems are quoted.

301 The area enclosed within the walls of the inner city of Suzhou was about 270,000 square metres. The area enclosed within the walls of the Forbidden City of Beijing is, according to Liu Dunzhen, (1980:281) 726,600 square metres (960m x 760m), whereas Johnston (1983:222, note 30) maintains that it is 580,500 square metres, without providing any reference for this figure. As for the measurements of Suzhou, Johnston has presumed the plan of Suzhou on the *Pingjiang Tu* to be on a reasonably accurate scale and

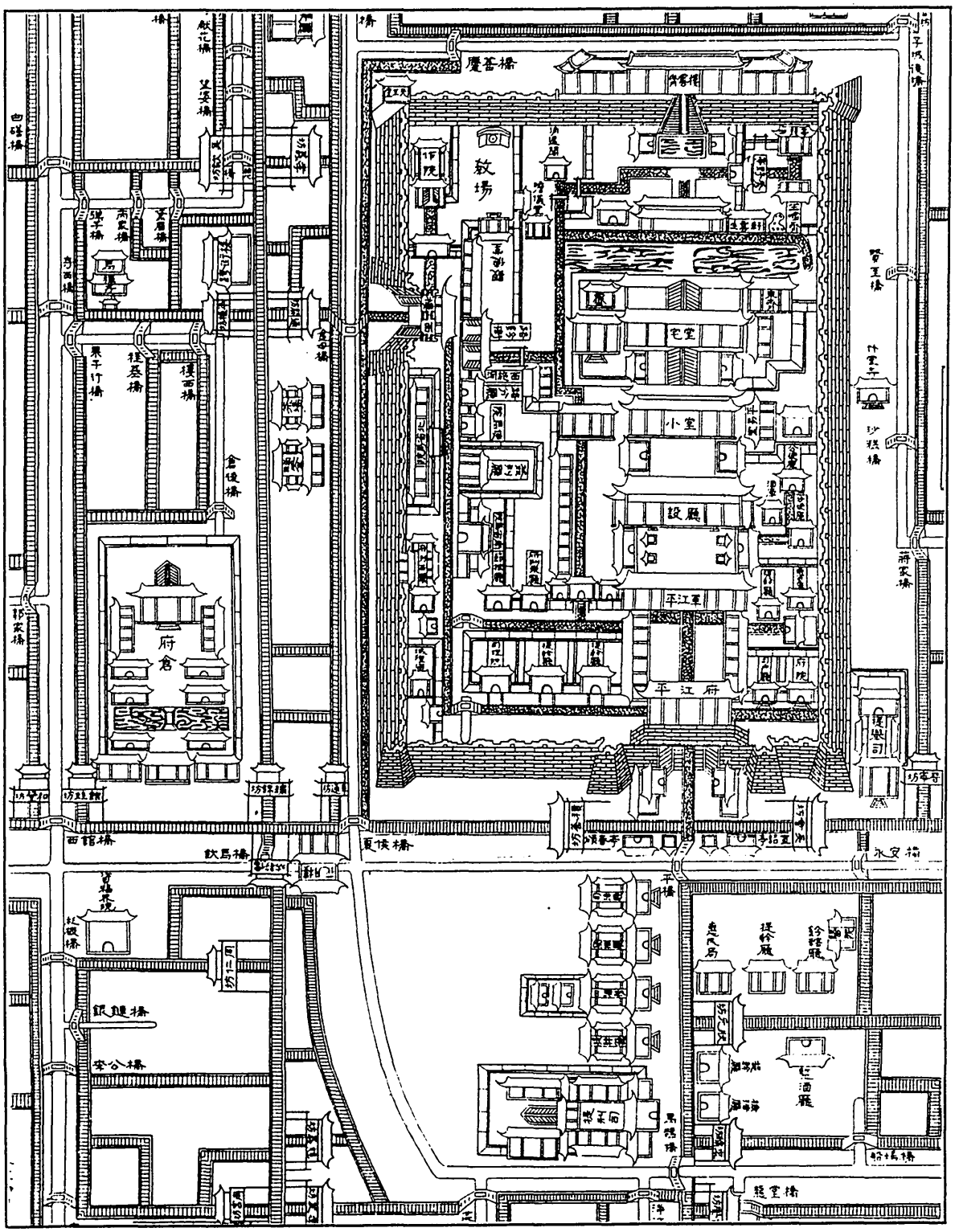

Figure 5-10 The inner walled-enclosure housing the prefectural offices of Suzhou in the Southern Song. Adapted from the 1229 city map. On both sides of the axial street running southward from the main entrance of the enclosure are various departments of the prefectural government. The large compound on the west side of the enclosure is the prefectural storehouse.

Yet the grandeur of the inner enclosure of the city of Suzhou as a prefectural capital was nevertheless remarkable, especially during the Southern Song period. In the early 1130s right after the Song court was driven to the South-east, Emperor Gao Zong 高宗 (Zhao Gou 趙構) was about to visit Suzhou, known at that time as Pingjiang 平江, and so ordered that palaces be built in the inner enclosure of the city which had been overrun and seriously damaged by the Jurchen cavalry in 1130. The construction work was completed in 1133, and in the tenth month of the following year, the emperor came to reside in the newly constructed inner enclosure. This new structure may have been reserved as the temporary imperial palace (*xinggong* 行宮) for short stays of the emperor away from the capital, until the third month of 1137 when it was converted back to the prefectural government building complex by imperial edict.[302] Whereas the *de facto* administrative status of the city of Suzhou during the early years of the Southern Song may be a matter of dispute,[303] it is certain that at this time it was through the intervention of the central government that the city acquired its physical magnitude and possibly some of the imperial symbolic implications embodied in it, with which the emperor alone was entitled to be associated. This aspect can be seen clearly in Fan Chengda's 范成大 statement that, since the main hall (*sheting* 設廳) of the inner enclosure was intended to function as the formal imperial court, the standard of its form was of the first class as an institution. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 6: "Guan Yu") In other words, the local government did not have, and should not have had, the right to construct any over-imposing office buildings, even though it may have had adequate manpower and

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thus the size of every structure depicted on it to be close to that of the real one. This presumption is very problematic because, like the picture maps of many other cities, this plan depicts important urban structures by means of elevational images, and is thus characteristic of precision in their positions and orientations, rather than in their dimensions. If we were to accept Johnston's presumed measurements, any large five-bay building in the inner enclosure would have been around 170 metres in length (i.e. the span of one pillar-interval or bay (*jian* 間) would have been around 34 metres), which is obviously too much out of proportion.

302 Cf. SPCK, vol. 3: *Pingjiangjun Fushu*, quotations from Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi*; *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu;" *Song Shi*, vols. 27-8: "Benji," nos. 27-8: 'Gao Zong," nos. 4-5.

303 Yu Shengfang 俞繩方 claims that during the period between 1131 and 1162, Emperor Gao Zong intended to relocate his capital at Pingjiang, and the city was therefore rebuilt in accordance with the requirements of an imperial capital. (JYCGBW 1988: 346, entry "Pingjiangfu Cheng.") Yet Yu does not give any reference to this statement, nor has any evidence been found to support it. A more cautious suggestion made by Wang Jian 王謇 is that Pingjiang functioned in the Southern Song as a *de facto* auxiliary imperial capital *(peidu* 陪都), and thus institutionally its spatial layout and structural organisation were the same as those of the capital Lin'an 臨安. (SPCK, vol. 3: "Qianxia Ting" and vol. 4: "Huxiang Shiqiao Xiang")

financial means to do so, unless the construction work was fully endorsed by the emperor, and the structures thus built were initially intended for the emperor's exclusive use.

This walled inner enclosure, grandiose as it was, remained as the prefectural government building complex from 1137 up to the end of the Yuan in the 1360s. The local war-lord Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 took the city as his capital and the inner enclosure as his palace in 1356; but in the face of his defeat by the Ming armies in 1367 after a ten-month siege, he had the inner enclosure burnt down. All its structures were turned into ruins.[304] Consequently, the prefectural government office was relocated from the early Ming on a new site in the west part of the city, on the north side of present Daoqian 道前 Street, which had formerly been the site of offices of another government agency.

An ill-fated attempt was made in the early 1370s to revert the original site to prefectural government use. The prefect Wei Guan 魏觀, discontented with the current prefectural government offices, including his official residence, which were cramped and ill-located in a low-lying and damp place, not unnaturally decided to rebuild them on the old site they had occupied throughout history. At the same time, he had an important city artery of water traffic called Jinfan Jing 錦帆涇 dredged.[305] A well-known poet, Gao Qi 高啟 (1336-1374), wrote a eulogistic prose essay for the ceremony of "raising the ridge-pole" (*shangliangwen* 上梁文)[306] on an auspicious day. This act, however, turned out to have been inauspicious indeed. Some colleagues of Wei Guan's surreptitiously reported to the

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304 Cf. *Huangchao Ping-Wu Lu*, A and C; *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 1: "Suzhoufu;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 21: "Gongshu," no. 1.

305 There are considerable discrepancies among various accounts of this river. Fan Chengda holds that Jinfan Jing was the inner moat of the city of Suzhou, (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 18: "Chuan") whereas Wang Ao in his *Gusu Zhi* (vol. 10: "Shui") states that it was the moat of the inner walled-enclosure, although he immediately contradicts himself by indicating that this river stretched in the north-south direction west of Le 樂 Bridge which was located in the middle section of Wolong 臥龍 Street, present-day Renmin 人民 Avenue. The majority of the Ming and Qing scholars nevertheless seem to have agreed on the position of Jinfan Jing as being between Han 憨 Bridge and Xianghua 香花 Bridge. (Cf., e.g., SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Guji" with quotations from Lu Xiong's *Suzhoufu Zhi* and Yang Xunji's *Wuyi Zhi*; *Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 1)

306 Mote (1962:234-6) holds that Gao Qi died because he wrote a customary congratulatory poem "On Raising the Roof Beams of the Prefectural Hall," although he also acknowledges the possibility that the poet composed a prose essay on the same occasion, which, as he believes, does not survive. However, the documents at my disposal all indicate that Gao Qi's death was triggered by the latter, because it contains the term *longpan huju* 龍蟠虎踞 (lit. "like a coiling dragon and a crouching tiger").

imperial court alleging that his resuming the site of the ruined palace and dredging the ditch (*fugong kaijing* 復宮開涇) held seditious implications. The Hongwu 洪武 Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, sent a private watchdog, a censor named Zhang Du 張度, to report on the activities in Suzhou. The charges were then documented that Wei Guan had, in the words recorded by Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1461-1527), "raised the basis of the obliterated king, and dredged the river of the defeated state" (*xing miewang zhi ji, kai baiguo zhi he* 興滅王之基，開敗國之河). (*Ye Ji*, vol. 4) This accusation led to the immediate arrest and execution of Wei Guan, Gao Qi and another implicated poet, Wang Yi 王彝, in 1374. The killing of Gao Qi was extremely cruel - he was cut in half at the waist (*yaozhan* 腰斬).[307]

The timing of Wei Guan's reconstruction of the prefectural offices on the site of the old inner enclosure was indeed awkward, especially happening as it did in Suzhou. Not only was it in the early years of Ming rule, when an act suspected of subversive or seditious implications, as Yang Xunji 楊循吉 puts it in the 1640s, "had to be of serious imperial concern, since [all between] the four seas [i.e. the world] had just begun to be stabilised;" (*Wuzhong Guyu*: "Weishou Gai Junzhi") but the fierce resistance of Zhang Shicheng's men against the Ming besiegers of the city made the Hongwu Emperor particularly resentful of the Suzhou region and all the more watchful of any signs of anti-Ming feelings. Mote (1962:238) has noted two possibilities in the mentality of the emperor at the moment when he received Zhang Du's report: either he really felt that there was treason afoot in Suzhou, or, violently suspicious of men of learning as he was in general, he reasoned that intimidation, by his swift action of making a terrifying example of his victims, could keep scholar-officials pliable and obedient. Since the inner enclosure was occupied by Zhang Shicheng between 1356 and 1367 as one of his palaces, and Zhang himself at that time took the title of king and was thus the chief enemy of the Hongwu Emperor, equating Wei Guan's act of resuming the old site with "reviving the basis of the obliterated" (*xing jimie zhi ji* 興既滅之基),[308] though ringing sinisterly cynical to us, may easily have sounded convincing to the emperor.

There were also other interpretations inferred from this construction work,

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307 For detailed information about this event, see *Ming Shi*, vol. 140: "Liezhuan," no. 28: "Wei Guan" and vol. 285: "liezhuan," no. 173: "Wenyuan," no. 1: "Gao Qi;" *Wuzhong Guyu*: "Weishou Gai Junzhi;" *Ye Ji*, vol. 1; *Pengchuang Leiji*, vol. 1: "Guochu Ji;" *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian;" XXZ, vol. C: "Gao Qingqiu." Mote 1962:234-40.

308 See *Ming Shi*, vol. 140: "Liezhuan," no. 28: "Wei Guan." Cf. *Ye Ji*, vol. 4 for a slight variation of wording.

involving yet more remote legends and historic events, which must have aggravated the wrath of the emperor. According to Fan Chengda, there was a legend that the king of Wu used to sail for pleasure in a boat with brocade sails (*jinfan* 錦帆) on the river which was later accordingly named Jinfan Jing 錦帆涇 (lit. "the water channel of brocade sails"). (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 18: "Chuan") The dredging of this river by Wei Guan was conveniently associated with this legend - "dredging the river of the defeated state,"[309] and thus probably interpreted as betraying his presumed ambition of bidding for power as had the king of Wu. Moreover, Gao Qi in his *Shangliangwen* used the term *longpan huju* 龍蟠虎踞 (lit. "like a coiling dragon and a crouching tiger;" see *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian;" XXZ, vol. C: "Gao Qingqiu"), to which the emperor must have been very sensitive. This term was immediately reminiscent of the terms used in the assessment of the topographical features of Nanjing 南京 attributed to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (A.D. 181-234), the prime minister of the Shu Han 蜀漢 state based in present-day Sichuan 四川 during the Three Kingdoms period:

> Mt. Zhong 鍾 [looks like] a coiling dragon, Mt. Shitou 石頭 [looks like] a crouching tiger. [Thus this site must be for] the palaces of emperors and kings.[310]

Thus the use of this term by Gao Qi was probably seen not only as implying that the city of Suzhou was in geomantic terms rivalling Nanjing which at that time was the imperial capital of the Ming, but also as expressing an ambition of those who were involved in the reconstruction work firstly to establish a separatist regime based on Suzhou against the Ming authority, and later to bid for power over the whole of China, in a similar manner to that of Sun Quan 孫權, the emperor of the Eastern Wu state, eleven centuries earlier.

To the Hongwu emperor, any such hints or inferences were simply

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309 The period of Helü Dacheng, built in 514 B.C., was short-lived, and the state of Wu was finally conquered by Yue in 473 B.C. See Chapters One and Two.

310 See *Taiping Yulan*, vol. 156: "Zhoujun" Section, no. 2: "Shu Jingdu," B, quotations from the *Wu Lu* 吳錄. In the former document (ibid.) it is also quoted from the *Wu Lu* and *Jiangbiao Zhuan* 江表傳 that around 220 B.C., the First Emperor of Qin 秦, during his tour of inspection to Kuaiji 會稽 prefecture, visited the site of Nanjing which was then called Jinling 金陵 (lit. "gold tumulus"). Being informed by a specialist in observing *qi* (*wangqizhe* 望氣者) that the terrain of Jinling possessed the *qi* of kingship, he had part of the range of the East Hill (*donggang* 東岡) cut away so as to break up this potential threat, and ordered the seemingly auspicious name Jinling to be change to Moling 秣陵 (lit. "fodder mound") which sounds much more humble. Four hundred years later, Sun Quan 孫權, who took Suzhou as one of his substantial bases, was persuaded by Zhang Hong 張紘 with the same geomantic argument to transfer his capital to Nanjing. (Ibid.)

intolerable, and extremely cruel execution was inevitably inflicted upon those who were implicated. It is true that the emperor soon discovered that he had made a great mistake about Wei Guan, one of his most able and devoted servants, and that he made public admission of his error and ordered an honourable funeral and burial for him at state expense. (See, e.g., Mote 1962:240) Yet the horror of this incident remained, and the site of the destroyed inner enclosure came under a tacit "taboo," as Yang Xunji writes, "no one, no matter how humble his family was, ever dared to construct a building on it [the site of the old inner enclosure]." (*Wuzhong Guyu*: "Weishou Gai Junzhi") Indeed, the city map (see Figure 5-3) drawn in the late Ming period in the mid-seventeenth century clearly shows that the site was left entirely vacant. This situation must have lasted until as late as the early Qing, because Xu Song and Zhang Dachun also make a similar statement in their *Baicheng Yanshui* (vol. 3: "Changzhouxian") published in 1690;[311] and on many of the city maps of the Qing in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the spot corresponding to the site is invariably marked with the words "disused site of the king's palace," although a few unimportant structures can be seen scattered on it, such as a small private school known as the Pingjiang Shuyuan 平江書院 at the end of the eighteenth century, and a martial arts practice hall and a couple of small temples at the end of the nineteenth century.[312]

Could this inner walled-enclosure, the most prominent feature in the city and ever more embellished by the reconstruction work in the 1130s, and intended to accommodate Emperor Gao Zong of the Southern Song during his temporary stays in Suzhou, have been restored after it was destroyed when Zhang Shicheng's army defending the city was finally overwhelmed by the Ming forces in 1367, if its resumption had not been pursued in so untimely a fashion in the first decade of the Ming rule? Such a possibility may have existed; but to conjecture which direction history could have taken, with or without this incident, is less important than to pay attention to the implications that the incident itself carries. The enterprise that Wei Guan undertook - rebuilding the prefectural offices and dredging a clogged artery of water traffic through the city, which we may see as a usual and reasonable act of a responsible official - was interpreted by the Hongwu Emperor as a

311 Cf. also the quotation in section 5.1.3 from the *Honglan Yisheng* on the unattended state of this site around the turn of the eighteenth century.

312 The geometrical centre of the city may have regained some degree of symbolic importance from 1717 when the provincial governor Wu Cunli 吳存禮 supervised the construction of Wanshou Gong 萬壽宮 (lit. "Palace of Eternal Life") on the east side of the site of the old inner walled-enclosure, it being a palace in which formal prostrations to the emperor were performed. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 21: "Gongshu," no. 1)

revelation of some seditious plot at work in Suzhou. This interpretation, basically reflecting the contemporary political situation, was nevertheless made entirely in symbolic terms deriving, either directly or indirectly, from both remote legends and recent historic events. History gave the city, and, of course, the region it represented, its pride as much as its misfortunes. Every important structure in the inner enclosure, for example, is mentioned in length in the *Wujun Zhi*, (vol. 6: "Guanyu") as indeed in all other local gazetteers, with an account of its origin and reconstruction works, and with a record of the deeds of the preceding scholar-officials and other historic events that were associated with it. Paradoxically, it was on the basis of similar sources that the lethal charges were brought against Wei Guan and Gao Qi. Yet more importantly, this symbolism[313] is not to be regarded simply as a set of rhetorical expressions of the political concerns of the emperor, but rather as an integral part of the political and social reality. A reality as such was, as it still is, according to Kertzer (1988:5), "in good part created through symbolic means;" and creating a symbol or, more commonly, identifying oneself with a popular symbol, became a potent means of gaining and keeping power.

Whether this event is regarded as incidental or inevitable, it did happen; and its physical and psychological effects were far-reaching. Here it is worth reiterating the fact realised by most sinologists that Chinese cities did not play the same historic role as their counterparts in medieval Europe. In the context of the present discussion, Elvin's (1973:177) remarks are exemplary:

> They were not centres of political or personal freedoms, nor did they possess distinctive legal institutions. Their inhabitants developed no civic consciousness (as opposed perhaps to a certain regional pride) nor served in any autonomous citizen armies. They were not communities of merchants at odds with an alien countryside and its rulers.

There were business centres in or around imperial Chinese cities, of course; and there was merchant influence on the cultural aspects of the urban world. Yet a peculiarly merchant culture did not develop in the cities, nor did the merchants form a powerful class that could seriously challenge the authority of the imperial government. The basic reason for the divergence between China and Europe was, as Elvin concludes, that the continuing existence of a unified imperial structure made

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313 Here, as does Kertzer, (1988:1-14; 185, n. 6) who talks about symbolism in politics, I follow Geertz's (1973:91) broad use of the concept of the symbol. A symbol thus refers to "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception," and the conception is the meaning of the symbol.

independent urban development in China as impossible as the development of a true feudal political and military structure. A regional or local city invariably acted as a political instrument of the state, and was but a node in the web of the imperial field administration. Normal bureaucratic measures in curbing the possible concentration of local power, seen by the central authority as a potential source of political threat, included the rule of rapid turnover of incumbents and the rule of "avoidance," keeping an official from serving in his own or even a neighbouring province; and the central government undoubtedly remained watchful of the activity and performance of its local agencies, especially those of the areas of political and economic importance.

Building activities were always taken by the Chinese as bearing strong social implications. Any structure in a city had to be located and built in accordance with its hierarchical position in the imperial system. Unless a structure was built with the royal consent or, as in the case of the reconstruction of the government halls in the city of Suzhou in the 1130s, for the emperor's exclusive use, any act with a suspicion of transgression would be prone to incurring grave consequences. If the intervention in the early 1130s from the imperial court of the Southern Song in the rebuilding of the walled inner enclosure had proved to render it magnificent, the intervention this time from the Ming emperor effectively marked the end of any possible re-use of its site ever for the prefectural government offices. Thus even though the cruel conclusion of the event of Wei Guan's attempt to rebuild the prefectural offices on the old site may be perceived as historically fortuitous because of the particular political conditions at that time and the violent and over-suspicious personality of the Hongwu Emperor, there was always a tendency for interventions to various degrees from the central government, either in support or in suppression, in the activities of its local officials - certainly including building activities. Thus, more strictly speaking, this incident, though taking place in the city and consequently having altered its physical features, did not really happen to the city of Suzhou itself so much as to the whole region of which the city was a symbol and node; and its result, extremely harsh as it was, did not entirely fall outside of the political, social and cultural context of imperial China.

5.3 PARTITIONING OF URBAN SPACE

The removal of the inner walled-enclosure and the general disuse of the

central area of the city were, as Mote observes, (1973:39) the only large mark which history appears to have left on the physical city in all the centuries from the Southern Song, or even earlier, to the end of the Qing. This, however, probably did not have as much immediate impact on the life of the ordinary people living in and around the city as some other changes might have had, such as blocking up a city gate, redeveloping an old street, and dredging a section of the canal network, since this inner enclosure, imposing and centrally positioned as it had been, formerly stood exclusively as a prefectural government establishment which served to represent the prestige of the city and prefecture rather than as a focus of everyday urban activities.[314] Hence it is very unlikely that the inner enclosure ever helped to form any public open space around it that had multiple functions and could thus be identified as what we call the "city centre" of many of its European counterparts.[315] Yet one of the long term effects of the dislodgement of the inner enclosure was that it physically gave way to the new pattern of the partitioning of urban space gradually coming into being from the Ming period onward, which, as has been discussed in section 3.2.3, was characterised by three nuclei: the gentry and official district in the south-east part of the city, where governmental and educational establishments were clustered; the business district centred around Chang Gate northernmost in the west wall and stretching in the suburbs west of that gate along the Grand Canal; and the district of family-based textile industry focused on the north-west part of the city.

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314 The manner of urban social management may have varied from one city to another, and probably from the mid-Ming on, and surely during the Qing period, marked institutional change in this regard occurred in most cities. (Skinner 1977e:547-8) Yet it seems safe to recognise that at least up to the beginning of the Ming, the involvement in regional or local governance of urban residents in any form of organisation had been rare, and that even during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the scale and area of such involvement were still very limited in the largest cities like Suzhou serving as regional administrative centres.

315 Johnston asserts that the open space in front of the main gate of the inner city "was an important civic space." (1983:215) Yet in every sense of the term "civic," this can hardly have been the case: (1) since the city was not a corporate entity of its own, in theory any open space within the walls was not exclusively associated with citizens legally identified as the inhabitants of the city; (2) even if the inhabitants of the city might in practice have had more frequent access to this space, few public establishments were grouped together here for their use, and the official temples, library, garden, and the like, were all situated behind gates of the walled, forbidden enclosure; and (3) although the public might have had the limited right of passing through this area, it was not a space in which they could participate actively in any political or social activity. The city of Suzhou, like all other cities in imperial China, *did* have some sorts of public open space; but discussion on them has to wait until Chapter Six when we talk about temple courtyards in the city.

Indeed, if the period from the late Tang to the Southern Song saw the process of transformation of urban space of Suzhou from the old system of the imposed division of the city into walled residential and market quarters into a much freer street plan in which shops and houses mingled together, it was during the Ming period that concentration of different activities into different areas of the city started to be discernible. A comparison between the city map of the Southern Song and the city maps of the Ming and Qing seems to verify this assertion. In Figure 5-11, I mark out on the 1229 city map the position of the prefectural government enclosure standing slightly south of the geographical centre of the city, its auxiliary offices outside its walls (especially on both sides of the axial route running from its main entrance southward), the prefectural school-temple (*fuxue* 府學), and the imperial examination complex (*gongyuan* 貢院) of the prefecture, together with the *yamen* of Wu county in the north-west part of city and of Changzhou county in the north-east. The disposition of these government offices in the Southern Song was already slightly skewed to the south-west of the city. Yet the diagrammatic plan of the city during the Ming and Qing periods, with important governmental establishments marked out in the same manner in Figure 5-12, indicates a notable tendency of further south-westward transference of the government offices at various levels. What exactly caused the concentration of these establishments in the south-west part of the city from the Ming onward is not yet clear, but we may suggest that it was facilitated jointly by the removal of the inner enclosure at the beginning of the Ming, the spaciousness and picturesqueness of the south-west quarter of the city,[316] and the convenient access of the government offices to the two city gates in the south-west corner of the walls. We may even surmise that the pull of the prefectural school-temple with its admired reputation and prestige[317]

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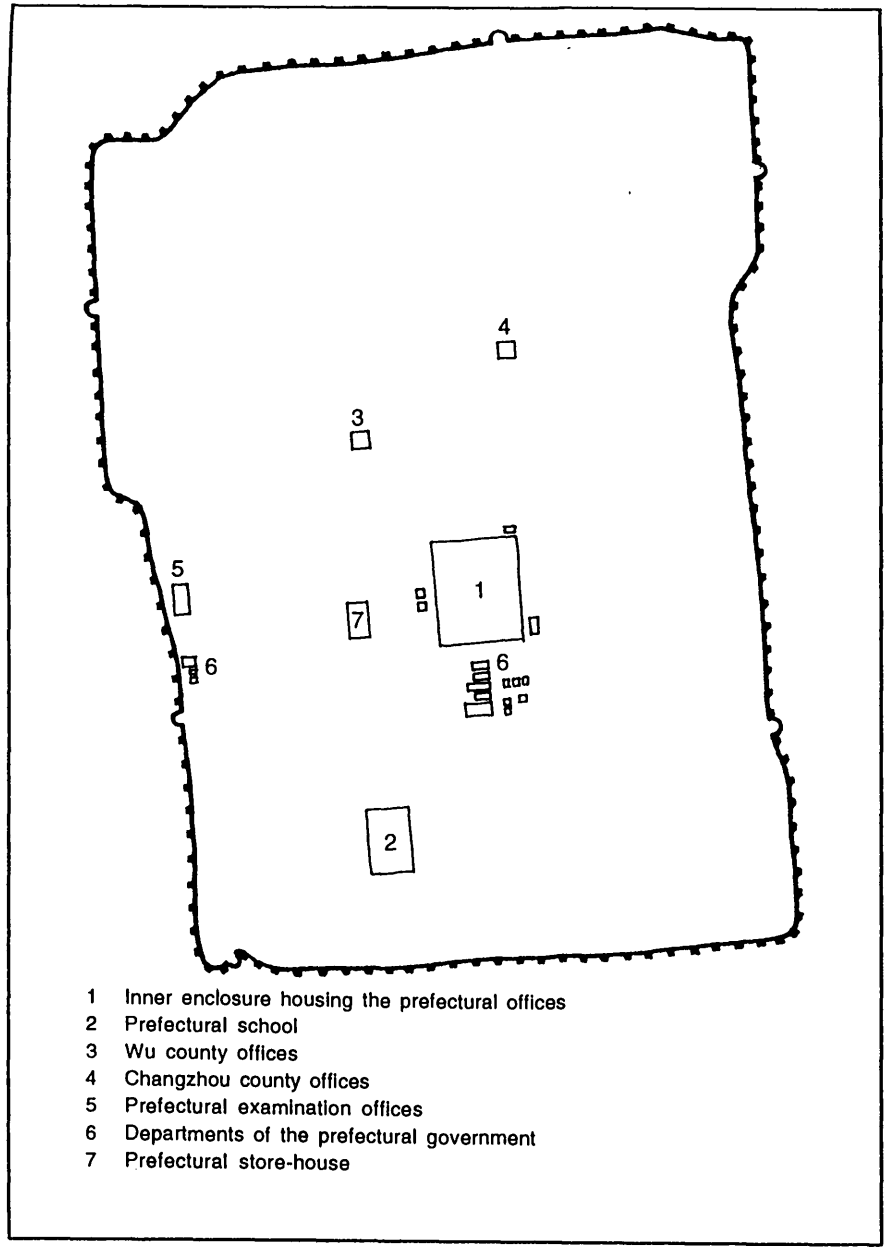
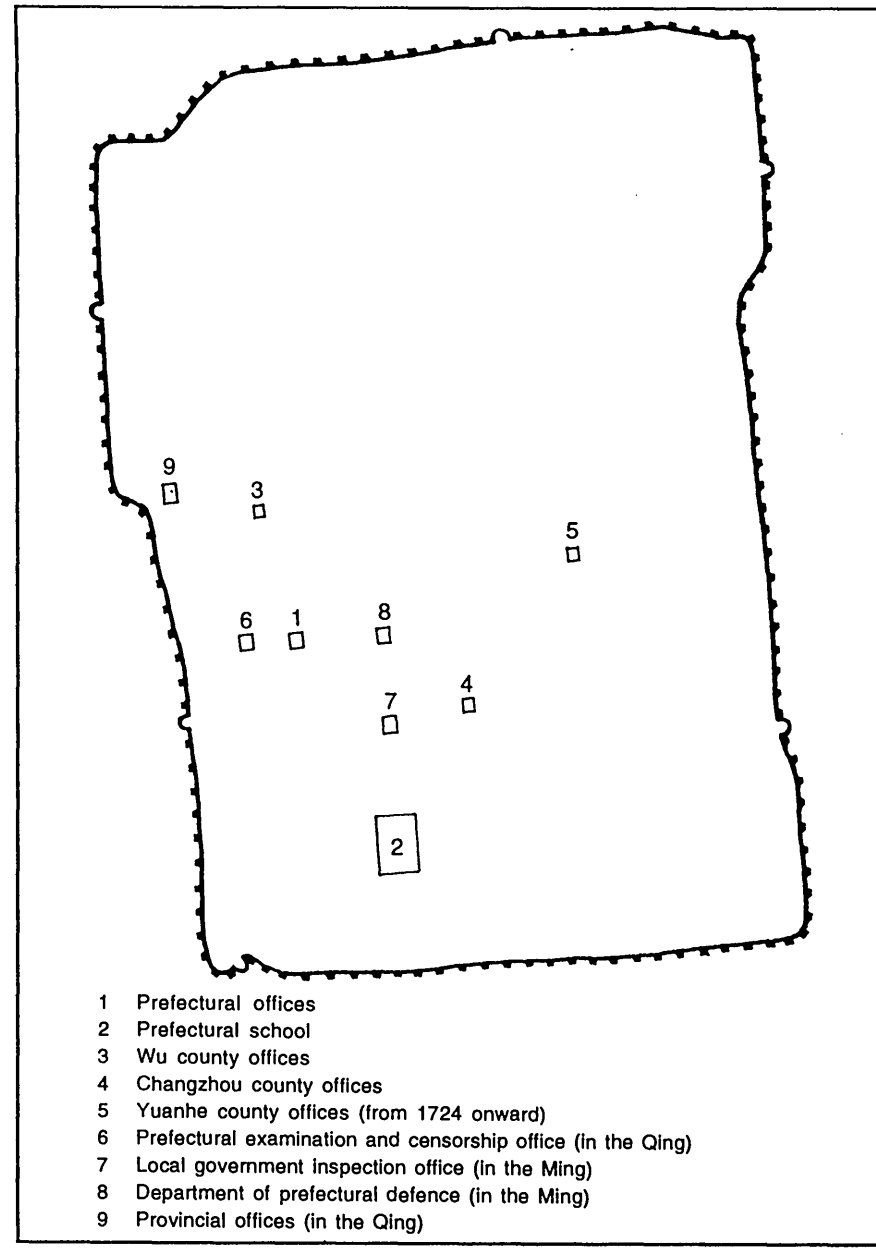
316 In the mid-tenth century, the ruling Qian 錢 family of the Wuyue 吳越 state, built in this part of the city a huge garden known as Nanyuan 南園 (lit. "the South Garden"). (Cf. *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Nanyuan;" *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 14: "Yuanting") By the Northern Song period, the south-east quarter of the city was still very much characterised by its natural scenery which attracted many officials and scholars to reside here. Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008-1048), as I have mentioned earlier, when travelling to Suzhou after his dismissal from office, saw the natural landscape of the quarter as "utterly unlike those within the city walls." He was so impressed by it that he bought a piece of land east of the prefectural school and built the famous garden, Canglang Ting 滄浪亭 (lit. "the pavilion on the bank of the blue ripples"). (*Canglang Ting Ji*)

317 Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052), one of the famous paragon scholar-officials, assigned to Suzhou as a prefect in 1035, successfully applied to the Song imperial court to establish the prefectural school on the south-east corner of the old South Garden. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 4: "Xuexiao") Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1041-1089) claims that this was the first time in history that Suzhou had its formal prefectural school, and that the influence of this establishment was such that a few years later, an imperial edict was issued for all prefectures and counties in China to set up similar schools. (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A:



1 Inner enclosure housing the prefectural offices
2 Prefectural school
3 Wu county offices
4 Changzhou county offices
5 Prefectural examination offices
6 Departments of the prefectural government
7 Prefectural store-house

Figure 5-11 The position of the important local government offices in the Southern Song.



1 Prefectural offices
2 Prefectural school
3 Wu county offices
4 Changzhou county offices
5 Yuanhe county offices (from 1724 onward)
6 Prefectural examination and censorship office (in the Qing)
7 Local government inspection office (in the Ming)
8 Department of prefectural defence (in the Ming)
9 Provincial offices (in the Qing)

Figure 5-12 The position of the important local government offices in the Ming and Qing.

upon these governmental establishments probably also contributed to this process.

It is interesting to note that the state-run textile bureaux (*Zhizaoju* 織造局 and *Zhiranju* 織染局) of Suzhou prefecture in the Ming and Qing, unlike those in the Yuan, were all located on the peripheries of the district of gentry and officials in the south-east, but closer to the district of family-based textile industry in the north-west (see Figure 3-14). These bureaux functioned not only as the places for textile production, but also as administrative centres in control of all local activities of this industry. During the Ming period, for example, every household engaged in spinning and weaving had to register itself with the bureaux; (Duan and Zhang 1986:16) and during the Qing, these bureaux in addition took charge of extracting tax from every loom in family-based textile production. (CH 1980:1162) Their special locations therefore seem to have indicated both the governmental nature of these establishments and their direct link with the district of family-based textile industry. An equally informative phenomenon is the location of the prefectural Temple of the City Walls and Moats (Chenghuang Miao 城隍廟). We understand that this cult provided a ritual link between the popular and the official state religions, (Shiba 1977:424; Feuchtwang 1977:*passim*) and thus represented the common interests of all sections of the city residents and, at least theoretically, of the residents of the entire prefecture. Whether by coincidence or as an inevitable outcome of urban development, the prefectural Chenghuang temple was located from 1370 onward[318] north-west of the junction of present-day Jingde 景德 Road and Renmin 人民 Road, a place close to all three districts, those of gentry and officials, trade and commerce, and family-based textile industry.

Little is known about how characteristic the urban features of the district of family-based textile industry were as compared to those of other parts of the city. A 1759 painting of the city, *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* 盛世滋生圖 ("Scroll of the Flourishing Times")[319] by Xu Yang 徐揚 offers us, however, a rare opportunity to make a fleeting comparison between the architectural traits of the business district

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"Xuexiao;" cf. Zhu's memoir contained in *Wujun Zhi*, op.cit.) These statements may later have inspired the saying that "the institution of [prefectural and county] schools throughout China started from Wu prefecture." (SYG 1991:213) Whereas this may be an overstatement, it is beyond any doubt that the prefectural school of Suzhou was recognised as the best in South-east China. (See, e.g., memoirs by scholars from the Song period on in *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 25: "Xuexiao," no. 1)

318 This temple was located within the inner walled-enclosure, in its north-west corner, during the Southern Song period.

319 The scroll is also known as *Gusu Fanhua Tu* 姑蘇繁華圖 (lit. "Scroll of Gusu's [i.e. Suzhou's] Prosperity").

and those of the gentry and official district. Figures 5-13 and 5-14 are sections of the scroll depicting respectively the area around the provincial examination office,[320] and the quarter at the north fringe of the gentry and official district. These two pictures show that this district was characterised by the relatively high walls of the residential complexes, more spacious courtyards with gardens, plenty of plants, and the lack of use of fire break walls (*fanghuoqiang* 防火牆) to separate individual buildings attached to each other - an aspect suggesting that houses in this area were not as densely built as some other parts of the city. The streets here appear more filled with people at leisure, women and children than with busy brokers and salesmen; they are usually flanked by one-storey shops which look to have been less ornate than ordinary houses and certainly much humbler than governmental buildings and temples. The shop signs announce those lines of specialised business which were closely associated with academic and official activities.

By contrast, the streets in the business district are much more bustling, as we see in Figure 5-15, containing a section of the scroll depicting Changmen 閶門 Street at the heart of the business district within the city walls. Packed with traders, the street is flanked by splendid two-storey shops catering for a much wider range of business. Fire break walls were regularly used for separating shops or residential buildings from each other, this area being densely occupied with timber structures. Not surprisingly, fewer gardens and plants are found here than in the gentry and official district, probably because of high land values and the normal desire of traders to keep "nonessential" overheads down. Paradoxically, it was the shops in the vicinity of the gentry and official district but outside the city walls that bear most resemblance to those of the street we have just seen above. The shops presented in Figure 5-16 are situated to the north of Xu 胥 Gate against the outer foot of the city wall, facing the west city moat. This area, i.e. along the west moat between Chang Gate and Xu Gate, which was simultaneously a section of the Grand Canal, was called Nanhao 南濠 (lit. "the South Moat")[321] and became an inter-regional trade centre from the mid-Ming onwards. Most of the shops there were ornated two-storey buildings separated by fire break walls. They included a few restaurants, teahouses, pharmacies, silk and cloth stores, and bookstores.

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320 The office was formally known as Anchashi Sishu 按察史司署 and popularly called Nietai 臬臺, and it was in charge of inspection of local government, judicial commissions and local imperial examinations. (CY, II, 1980:1249; CH, 1980:694)

321 This name was probably derived from taking Chang Gate as the reference point, as the moat north of the gate was called Beihao 北濠 (lit. "North Moat").

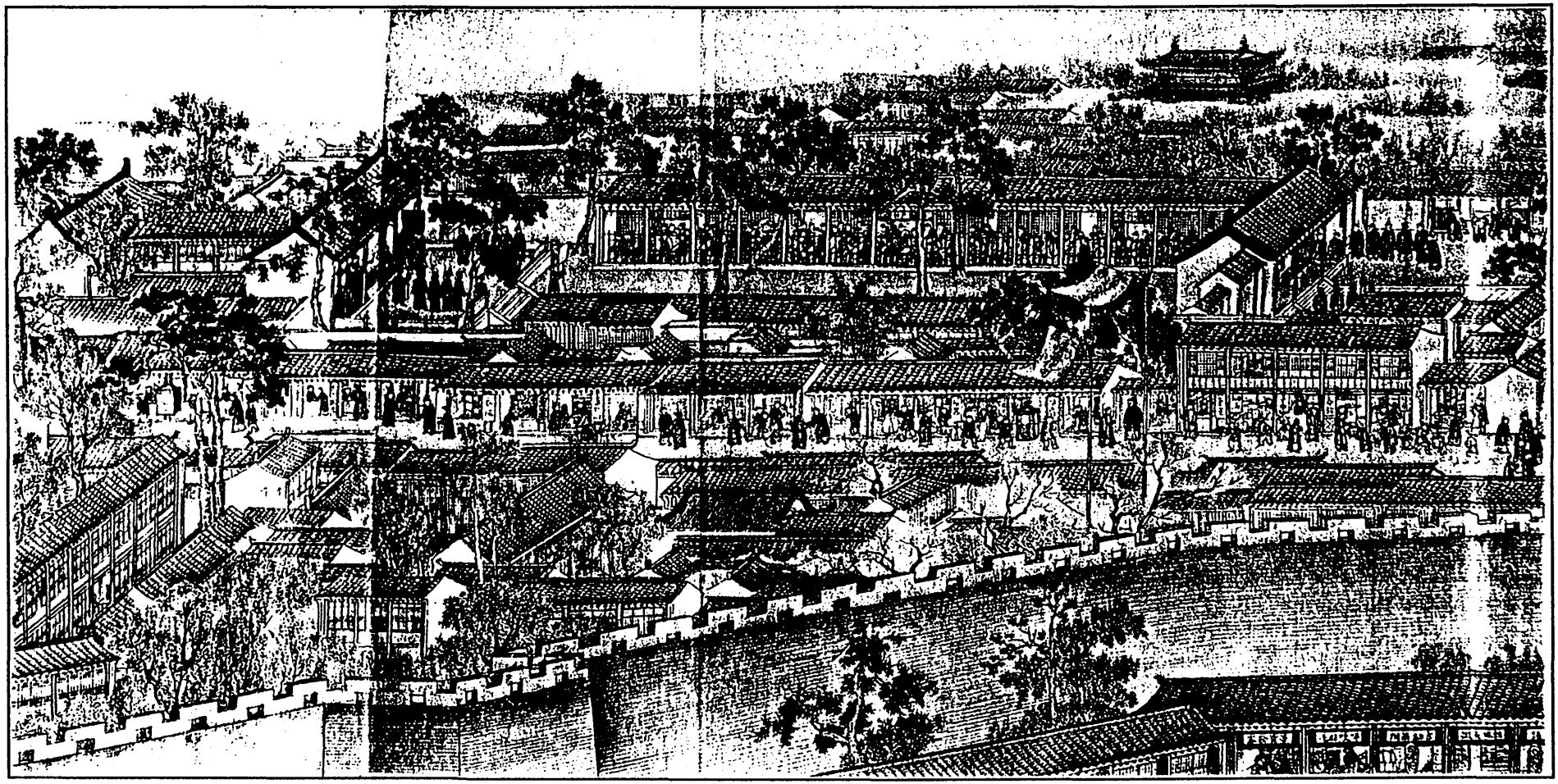

Figure 5-13 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting the area around the provincial examination office. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 52.

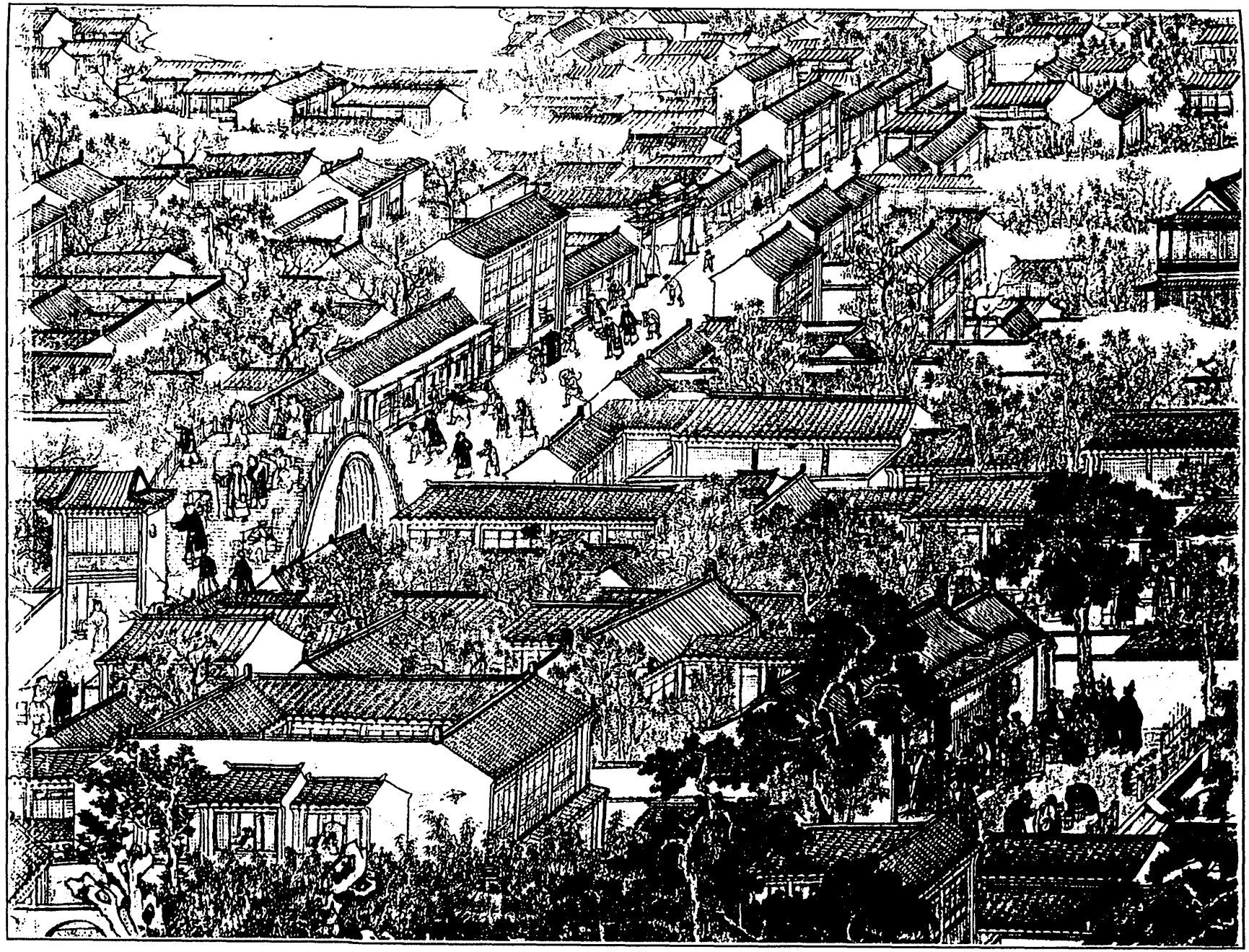

Figure 5-14 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting the quarter around Shenya Qian 申衙前 Street. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 57.

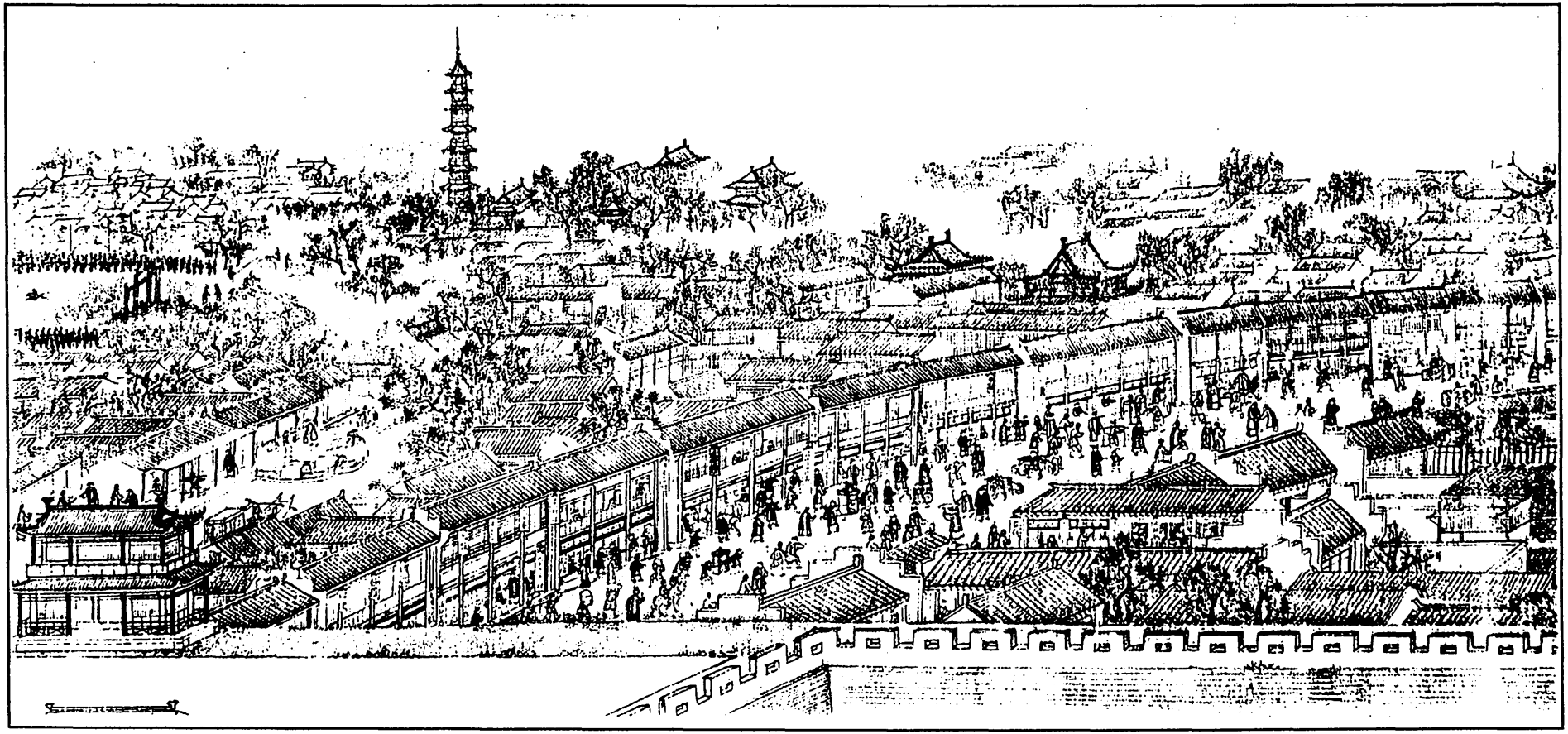

Figure 5-15 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting Changmen 閶門 Street. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 64.

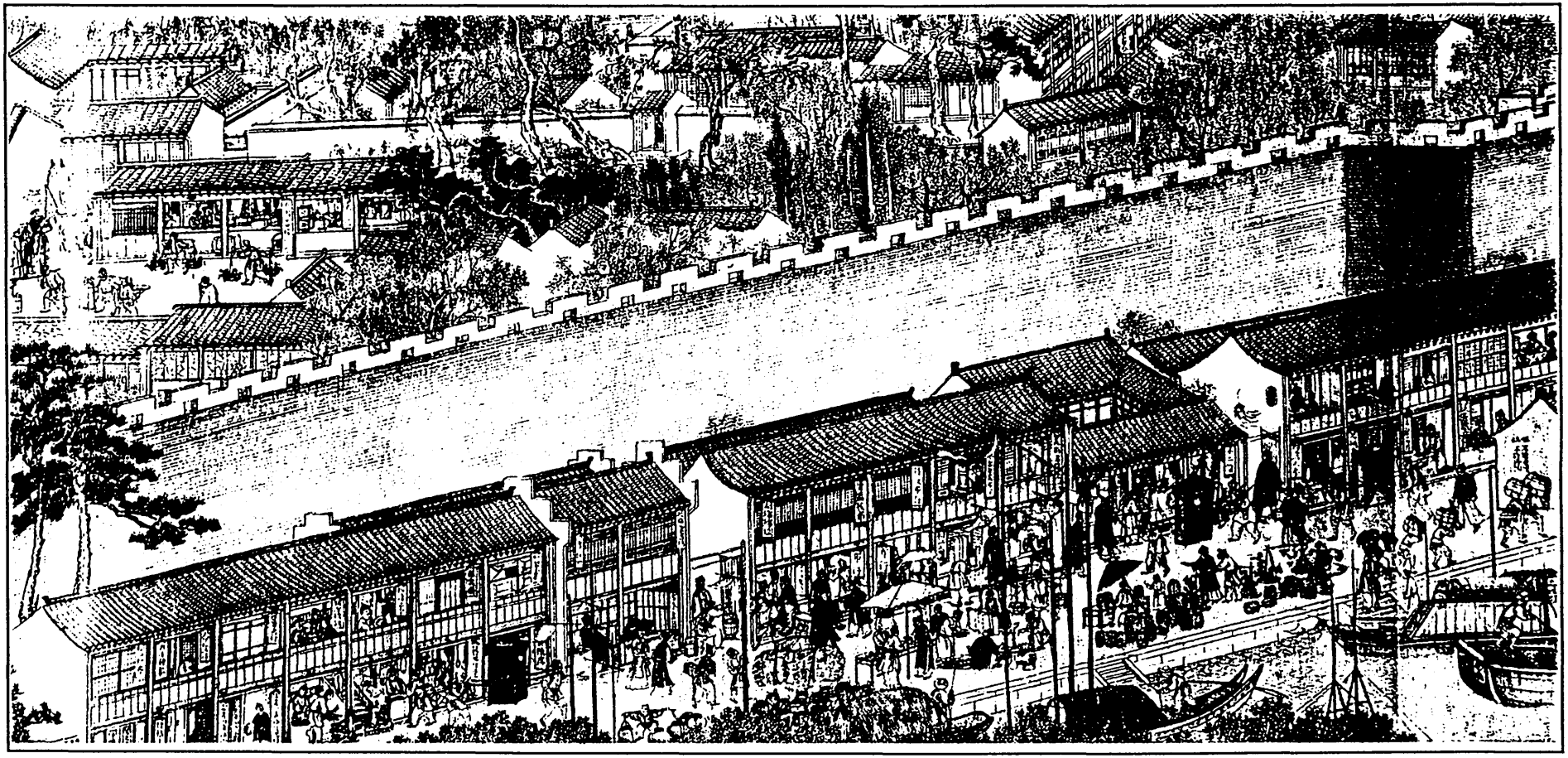

Figure 5-16 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting the shops against the outer foot of the city walls north of Xu Gate. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 53.

There were also a stationery shop, a musical instruments shop, a fortune-telling house, a store selling sundry goods from remote regions, and some other specialised shops. Transactions of business are shown being briskly conducted inside and outside these shops, the moat functioning as a busy transport route. This section of the scroll vividly displays an atmospheric contrast between the two domains separated by the city wall - the tranquillity and lush green trees inside, and the bustling and motley buildings, goods, shop signs and traders outside.

Michael Marmé (1993:36) rightly points out that "the most striking embodiment of the early Ming prosperity was found outside the city gates - particularly the north-western Chang Gate." Indeed, the west suburbs extended from Chang Gate westward along the canals to Feng 楓 ("maple") Bridge and to Huqiu 虎丘 Hill, and later around Xu Gate there were busy areas of trade and commerce in the late imperial era. Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523), a famous poet and one of what were known as the "Four Painters of the Ming," describes the area around Chang Gate in his poem *Changmen Jishi* 閶門即事:

> Paradise in this world is Wuzhong 吳中 [i.e. Suzhou],
> Wherein most remarkable is [the area around] Chang Gate.
> Thousands of emerald green sleeves are seen round and about the mansions,
> Millions of gold pieces are flowing along the canals running in east-west directions.
> Have the merchants and businessmen ever taken a break throughout the whole night,
> Who come from the four quarters [of the world] with utterly different dialects?
> . . .
> (Quoted in *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4: "Chengchi")

Apart from the hyperbole natural to poetry, these stanzas do offer us some information about the extent to which the area outside Chang Gate had developed by the early sixteenth century.

Probably more truthful assessment of this area was provided by Zheng Ruozeng 鄭若曾 (1505-1508), a native of Kunshan 崑山 county who produced the *Jiangnan Jinglüe* 江南經略, a document published in 1568 on the defence of the Lower Yangzi region made necessary by the 1550s *wokou* 倭寇 (Japanese pirates) crisis.[322] He writes:

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322 Cf. *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 93: "Renwu," no. 20 and vol. 139: "Yiwen," no. 4: "Haifang."

> From Chang Gate to Feng Bridge is a distance of almost ten *li.* On both the north and south bank [of the canal] the residents are as close together as the teeth of a comb, especially on the south bank. None of the goods which are difficult to obtain in the four quarters [of the world] are not found here. Those who pass through are dazzled by its brilliance. Feng Bridge in particular is the spot where merchant ships converge. North of the upper reaches of the River [Yangzi] is where great trade in beans and grain and cotton assembles. It is here that all the guests [merchants] from north and south, rest their oars and cast off. . . . Nowhere under Heaven can match Suzhou in its abundance of money and goods, and nowhere in Suzhou can match the Chang Gate [area]. . . . One-tenth of what the pirates are hankering for is within the city walls, while nine-tenths is in this area [outside Chang Gate]. (*Jiangnan Jinglüe*, vol. 2A: "Fengqiao Xianyao Shuo")

The pressure from the Japanese pirates on the security of this west suburban area was so grave at that time that building another wall to enclose it was once debated. According to Cao Zishou 曹自守 who was appointed magistrate of Wu county in 1559,

> From Xu Gate and Chang Gate sprawling westward are houses which become as closely lined up like the teeth of a comb as those within the city walls. Most residents in this area are sojourners. A few years ago when the pirates came, advisers [to the local government] suggested building another wall outside the city [in the west suburbs]; it would be a partial one so that [its two ends] would be attached to the great city walls. But in the end it was not carried out at all. (*Wuxian Chengtu Shuo*)

Cao's contemporary, a native of Changzhou county, Liu Feng 劉鳳 (1517-1600), wrote an essay entitled *Changxi Zhucheng Lun* 閶西築城論, discussing in what form the new wall for the west suburbs should be constructed if it really needed construction. Apparently more conscious of preserving the unimpeded accessibility of commercial traffic to the west moat, on which, Liu believed, the prosperity and wealth of the region relied, he vigorously argues against the idea of building merely a partial wall, with its westernmost edge reaching Feng Bridge and its two eastern ends attached to the west wall of the city; instead, he suggests that, if people are worried about the defence problem, a self-complete circle of wall should be constructed to enclose the area stretching from Dingjia 丁家 Alley about seven hundred metres west of Chang Gate, westward to Feng Bridge and northward to the whole Shantang 山塘. This new independent circle of wall and the old city walls would, he declared, stand facing, protecting each other, and sandwich the strip of land along the west moat so that both could jointly function as a double deterrent to any infiltration into it. Since Liu Feng's concern is only that of the strategic

problems in the possible construction of the new wall, he does not propose in what exact form it should be. Nevertheless, from Figure 5-17 in which I mark out on a diagrammatic map of the city of Suzhou and its west suburbs the position of the places Liu mentions, we can see that it would have been a huge project had his proposal been pursued.

Whether because the expense that such a project would have incurred was too great for the local government to spare at that time, or because the already significantly mitigated threat of the pirates to this region from the 1560s onward made the officials in charge believe that the project was no longer necessary, neither of the plans ever materialised. Yet it is important to note that, although the two plans were at obvious variance with each other, as far as the urban form of Suzhou is concerned, there was an implicit agreement between them: the new wall was conceived to be either an auxiliary one "attached to" the old city walls or a totally separated one; but it was never considered to be an equal and integral part of them. The last choice, which the scholar-officials did not consider, would have led to an effective alteration of the shape of the city, to an end to the *raison d'être* of some of the urban features of utmost importance, and thus to the tarnishing of many accumulated historical meanings embedded in them, which were all together indispensable for the city to be identified as the city of Suzhou. If the failure to pursue the building of a new wall to enclose and protect the west suburbs was largely attributable to the practical conditions at that specific time, did not the fact that the possibility of "re-building" the west wall of the city by extending it westward never came into the scholar-officials' minds reflect their profound respect, either conscious or subconscious, for this long established "fixed institution" and their somewhat peculiar sense of history?

The lack of a defensive wall did not hamper the continuous economic centrality of the area outside Chang Gate during the Qing period; and the concentration of regional and inter-regional trade in this area led to the flourishing of many other lines of business. Elegant restaurants, hotels, teahouses, and the like, massed along the Grand Canal stretching from Chang Gate to Huqiu Hill in the west. (See, e.g., *Tongqiao Yizhao Lu*, vol. 10: "Shilu") Permanent theatres started to be established here from the 1720s or 1730s onward, and by the 1780s over twenty of them were regularly open to the public.[323] (XXZ, vol. C: "Guoyuan Shijian Xiguan") It is

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323 Before the early eighteenth century, dramas were played in this area on large boats on the canals, initially to serve the relevant deities during specific festival periods, but

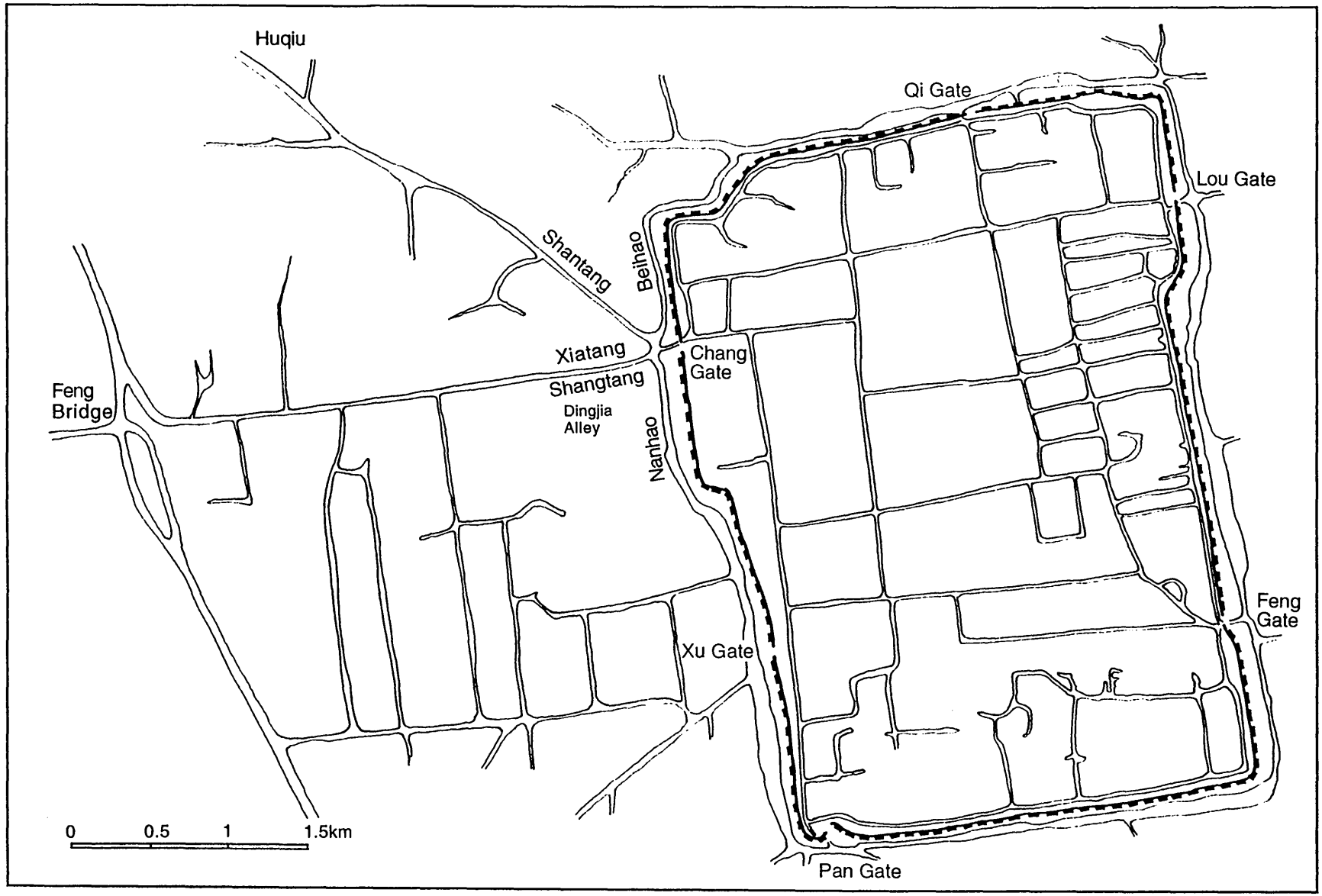

Figure 5-17 Diagrammatic map of the city of Suzhou and its west suburbs.

therefore not surprising that this area was regarded by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (?-1763) as "uniquely the outstandingly wealthy and dissolute place of the mundane world [*hongchen* 紅塵]." (*Honglou Meng*, chap. 1) The importance of the suburbs outside the city gates of Suzhou is epitomised by Shen Shouzhi's 沈守之 remarks. As a Wu county scholar of the late Qing, he records in detail in his *Jiechao Biji* 借巢筆記 events of the fall of the city of Suzhou to the Taiping 太平 rebels in the fourth month of 1860. After describing how thoroughly the areas outside the city gates, especially Chang Gate, were plundered and destroyed *before* the city itself was seized,[324] Shen writes in grief, "While the walled city did not fall, its quintessence was utterly annihilated." (*Jiechao Biji*: "Sucheng Shixian Lunlüe")

5.4 URBAN SPACE AND CITY WALLS

The order to burn down the houses and shops in the west suburbs was issued by the local Qing official Xu Youren 徐有壬 who was at the time in charge of the defence of the city. Whether this decision was really tricked out of him and then carried out by the rebel agents who pretended to have led the Qing reinforcements to Suzhou, as Shen Shouzhi claims, or whether it was made simply as an expedient, pre-emptive measure to destroy any possible shelter that the rebels might have been able to take during the possible siege, we do not know. In any event, this act proved to have been a fatal blow to the prosperity of this area, which hastened the process of the shift of economic domination from Suzhou to Shanghai. However, the focus of my discussion is on the fact of the continued development of the suburbs west of Chang Gate as the "central" business district for over four centuries during the late imperial period, since it affords me an opportunity in this section to make a further enquiry into the paradoxical phenomenon of the stability of the city form in time in the midst of urban expansion in space, and into the relationship between the actuality of Suzhou's urban development and people's, especially the literati's, conception of what the city was or should be. Although the specific process of the development of the city of Suzhou from the mid-Tang onward does not speak for that of all cities in China, and undue sweeping generalisation from this case should

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later mainly to entertain the public. It was during the Yongzheng 雍正 reign-period (1723-1735) that the first theatre on land was built on the estate known as Guoyuan 郭園. (XXZ, vol. C: "Guoyuan Shijian Xiguan")

324 For more information about this event, see the Appendix of the 1980 edition of the *Tongqiao Yizhao Lu*, quotations from Ke Wuchi's 柯悟遲 *Louwang Yongyu Ji* 漏网喁魚集 in the annotation of Yu Pingbo's 俞平伯 poem (no. 3) on Suzhou, and quotations from Tian Huisheng's 天悔生 *Jinti Yishi* 金蹄逸史 in Xie Guozhen's 謝國楨 *Memoir.*

therefore be avoided, there is no doubt that some of its aspects are nevertheless informative of the tendencies common in Chinese urban history, particularly in that of the economically more advanced regions.

We may recall that the character *cheng* 城 traditionally meant both "city" and "city walls" (see section 2.4.2). In Zhou times, however, it was used much more often to indicate the fortifications themselves[325] than what they enclosed. For the latter, *guo* 國 (lit. "state" or "city-state"), *du* 都 (lit. "state capital city") and *yi* 邑 (lit. "city" or simply "settlement") were the usual words, the first two of which seem to have more faithfully reflected the nature of the cities in the Eastern Zhou, in the sense that, in Wheatley's (1971:398) words already quoted in section 2.3.1, "city and state were coeval" and "the city was the organising principle of the state, and all generated cities were in their earlier phases city-states." The fundamental political and social change accompanying the conquest of the rival states and the eventual powerfully centralised unification of China by the Qin in 221 B.C. brought to an end the *raison d'être* of the denotation not only of *guo* as "city-state," but also of *du* as any "city" other than the imperial capital: there came to be only one capital, the imperial one, which itself was not a state, and other cities were merely administrative centres at various levels governed by the central authority. It was the third character *yi*, which did not have any connotation of "sovereign state," that continued down to this century to be applied to cities which housed the regional or local imperial government seats. This change is reflected, for example, in the opening passage of the "Chengchi" section in the *Wuxian Zhi*, (vol. 18B) where the terms *mingdu wangyi* 名都望邑 (lit. "the famous capital and the prestigious city") are used to refer to the city of Suzhou. Here the first term *mingdu* implies the Wu capital, Helü Dacheng, in the late sixth century B.C., whereas the second term *wangyi* indicates the city in the imperial era.

The more accurate word for "city," however, was undoubtedly *cheng*, although at times it was used in combination with *yi*, *guo* 郭 (lit. "outer city walls") or *chi* 池 (lit. "city moats"). In fact, the use of this character, very often unambiguously denoting "city walls" during the pre-Qin period, later gradually came equally

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325 Any massive wall constructions, usually built by a king, a prince or a noble for various purposes, were called *cheng*, regardless of the size of the areas they enclosed. Within the territory of the state of Wu, for example, there were Mihu Cheng 麋湖城 in which the king allegedly raised his elks, Lixi Cheng 欐溪城 in which he kept his ships, Wuli Cheng 巫欐城 in which he accommodated his guests from remote states, etc. (See *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2)

frequently to connote "city" - a semantic adjustment abundantly evidenced in the local gazetteers of Suzhou from the Song dynasty onward, as compared with those before that time.[326] The preponderant propriety of the application of the term *cheng* over the term *yi* to the city which, in the minds of the Chinese, was invariably a centre of a certain unit of field administration, lies in the fact that the walls denoted by the former from its origin were always the most basic element of such a city if it was to be regarded as a proper, comprehensive and coherent institution; walls and local government offices were the two prerequisites of the city.[327] The walls did not mark out any legal distinction between the within and the without. As I have emphasised in section 3.3, the city of Suzhou, like other cities in imperial China, did not evince the traits of cities in dual societies - a sociological model that is essentially Western. Such a city was instead what Mote (1973:54) calls "a very open institution" - its residents had no legal or social status distinguishing them from rural residents, and probably had no sense of themselves as forming a cohesive and self-perpetuating urban group.

Yet although the city of Suzhou was not a corporate entity of its own but a part of a regional area which was largely rural and of which it was the node and symbol, the area which we regard as "urban" was substantially confined within the city boundaries demarcated by the city walls until perhaps as late as the end of the Yuan in the 1360s; in other words, the reality of the city as a local (and, later, regional) political and economic centre was entirely consistent with the intrinsic meaning of the term *cheng*. From the early Ming onward, however, the process of "commerce spilling out of cities," the first sign of which may have appeared in Suzhou and other large cities in the late Tang, (Skinner 1977a:25) dramatically quickened its pace. In the case of Suzhou, the pull of the Grand Canal geographically upon

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326 Cf., e.g., *Yue Jue Shu*, vol. 2; *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, vol. 4; *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A; *Gusu Zhi*, vol. 16, esp. the opening passage; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 4, esp. the opening passage. This change proves to have been the case for both the regional or local cities and the imperial capital which additionally acquired the exclusive title *du* or *jing* 京. In the present study, however, I have to restrict our focus to the regional or local cities.

327 There were other emblems of the establishment of an administrative city, some of which may have claimed a longer history, such as the altars of Earth and Grain and other natural features, than others, notably the Confucian school-temple and the temple of Chenghuang, which became more or less the normative features of a city in the second half of the imperial era, although they did not come together to be incorporated in its all-encompassing institution at the same time. Temples of popular religion, some of which were later shared by or adopted into the state religion, were located as much in the city as in the countryside, just as Buddhist and Daoist temples were. As for the economic aspects, few would doubt Feuchtwang's (1977:583) assertion that "in only very rare cases would a city have been purely administrative." Yet the development of its economic functions was more of the *de facto* than of the *de jure* element of an administrative centre.

commerce eventually resulted in the development of the prosperous west suburbs. At the same time, city systems in the Lower Yangzi region, as in other macroregional cores identified by Skinner, (1977a:28; b:*passim*) were now more mature and more fully fleshed out than those in the medieval era: capitals and market towns were better integrated into a single hierarchical system, and the total "urban" population was more evenly distributed throughout the hierarchy.

Here we are confronted with two interesting but seemingly conflicting phenomena. Mote (1977:102) correctly points out that, in general, traditionally esteemed "Chinese values did not sustain a self-identifying and self-perpetuating urban elite as a component of the population,"[328] Yet during the late imperial period there gradually appeared, as Johnson (1985a:71) puts it, "important differences between urban and rural mentalities." These differences were substantial only in the lower levels, while literati culture was probably much the same in country or city, (op. cit. 37) but they *did* nurture the rise of a sort of "urban identification" among certain groups of residents in and around capital cities and large market towns. This change is reflected in the development of certain social customs among urban residents in Suzhou, which were somewhat different, though not in kind, from those among rural residents. The description of the customs in the Southern Song by Fan Chengda in his *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 2: "Fengsu") is characterised by his accounts of those of the city, which show few if any differentiations from those of the countryside. This indicates that it was at that time the regional rather than urban-rural variation of customs that could be discerned. For Gu Lu, by contrast, urban residents' particular ways of behaving during the seasonal festivals in the Qing could be distinguished from those of their country fellows, although such distinctions were apparent only in some of the aspects of social conduct of the ordinary populace rather than in those of the literati and gentry.[329] (*Qing Jia Lu*, *passim*)

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328 Skinner (1977c:267) shares this view by stating that "China stands out among traditional agrarian societies in having an elite that was by no means predominantly urban."

329 One of the interesting examples of this distinction is revealed in Gu Lu's account of the annual celebration of the birthday of the god Dongyue Di 東嶽帝 (lit. "Emperor of the East Mountain"). Since those who came to burn incense in the god's temples - either located in the countryside or in the Xuanmiao Guan in the city of Suzhou - were mostly from the rural areas, this worship was humorously called *caoxie xiang* 草鞋香 (lit. "incense of straw sandals"). (*Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 3: "Dongyue Shengri") Although not all peasants necessarily wore straw sandals, the use of this term by the urban residents immediately identified themselves as differentiated from the rustic and economically disadvantaged yokels.

On the other hand, it was precisely during the same period that the spatial dichotomy of the urban and the rural, previously marked out by the city walls, became somewhat blurred, as many areas - numerous market towns and the busy suburbs of the city - were so densely populated and commercially activated that they could hardly be regarded as rural. The best example is the area west of Chang Gate and later the one west of Xu Gate, which were certainly no less "urban" than many of those within the city walls in the sense of the term as we use it nowadays. The non-rural traits of the west suburbs in the late imperial period were obviously acknowledged by contemporary scholars as well. In every local gazetteer compiled after the mid-Ming, these areas are referred to by their names, Jinchang 金閶, Shantang 山塘, Shangxiatang 上下塘 (i.e. Shangtang 上塘 and Xiatang 下塘), etc. (see Figure 5-17), rather than by the term *jiao* 郊 (lit. "areas outside the city walls") which emphasises the state of being non-urban, as frequently applied to the much less remarked upon east suburbs. What was urban was no longer physically separated by the city walls from what was rural, and the urban-rural continuum became more clearly manifested in space.

Those who saw themselves or were regarded by others as "urban" did not necessarily reside in the area enclosed by the city walls,[330] and their apparent advantage in wealth and sophistication over their country fellows was not gained *de jure* but provided by the competitive urban milieu - as much in the busy suburbs as in the city *per se* - in which luxury consumption, entertainment, improved access to education, economic specialisation, opportunities for commercial ventures, and so forth, were more concentrated. In other words, it was the different way of daily life and the different type of social pressure in these areas, emerging

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330 We understand that by the beginning of the imperial era in the late third century B.C., the conditions allowing the sharp division into distinct urban and rural cultures seem to have vanished, as had the use of the opposing terms *guoren* 國人 (lit. "inhabitant of the walled capital city") and *yeren* 野人 (lit. "inhabitant in the fields beyond the suburbs") in their original senses. (See section 3.3.1) Consequently, there was no equivalent word in imperial China to "citizen" or "burgher" in the European sense of "inhabitant of a city or town" until the beginning of modern times. The terms that came closer to denote city residents were the ones composed of the character *shi* 市 (lit. "market"), such as *shimin* 市民, *shiren* 市人, *shiyong* 市庸, *shijingtu* 市井徒, and *shijing zhi chen* 市井之臣, all emphasising more the nature and social class of the trading profession (and, to a lesser degree, the handicraft profession) than urban-rural distinction. It is true that, simply because markets were more often formed in and around the cities, these terms were usually applied to those residing there; but this does not mean that a resident of a market town or a business suburb of a city would not be called by these terms, nor that it was proper to refer to an intellectual living in the city thus.

along with what Rawski (1985a:6) calls "a gradual and long-term trend toward the triumph of the market economy," rather than any different legal and social status, that forged this kind of urban identification. Thus, the two seemingly conflicting aspects described above were in fact merely two congruent sides of the process of urban development in the late imperial period, which development was stimulated by rapid growth of the economy over which, as Rawski (op. cit. 5-6) notes, direct government controls were steadily more and more relaxed.

This process paradoxically did not, and could not, substantially challenge the scholar-officials' orthodox view of the city, the persistence of which is reflected in the way the city is depicted in the Ming and Qing local gazetteers. Although their "Chengchi" 城池 (lit. "city walls and moats") section emphasises, as its title signifies, the chronological record of the construction of the city walls and gates, their form, and their measurements, it nevertheless shows a tendency to associate the walls with what they enclosed, a tradition probably started in the Northern Song by Zhu Changwen in his *Wujun Tujing Xuji*.[331] This is particularly evidenced in the opening passage of the section in question, where the characteristics of the city's spatial organisation, the internal transport system, residential quarters, bridges, etc., are eulogised. On the other hand, the description of the bustling west suburbs is invariably set out in the "Fengsu" 風俗 (lit. "folklore and customs") section. For the traditionally minded scholar-officials, and probably also for the populace at large, no matter how densely these areas were populated, how prosperous they became, and how essential the business conducted there was to the city, to the prefecture and even to the whole nation, they could only be regarded as part of the "local customs" which, compared to those "fixed institutions" - the city walls undoubtedly being one of them (see section 2.6) - were always transient and thus prone to change.

In the case of Suzhou, our first impression would be that the ideal conception of a city held particularly by scholar-officials in the late imperial period, i.e. the area enclosed and represented by the city walls, somewhat diverged from, or lost touch with, the reality of urban development in their times. Yet a closer look at the issue reveals something different. Rawski (1985a:1) has summarised a consensus reached by most scholars of China "that Chinese society underwent significant changes in the course of the Ming dynasty, changes that produced the political,

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331 Interestingly, it is in the "Chengchi" section of the *Wuxian Zhi* compiled in the Republic in 1933 that the topic is strictly limited to the walls *per se*.

social, and economic institutions of late imperial China." However, the fundamental imperial ideology and government system persisted, so did the political and social function of regional and local cities as administrative centres. Such a city itself was, as before, not a judicial entity but a symbol and node of the territory of which it was a part, and it was the city walls that physically manifested this symbol in the most conspicuous and meaningful way. In this sense, the topic of the "city" for the authors of local gazetteers was to some extent equivalent to the topic of the institution, history, culture, government and social order, all of which were symbolised by the city walls.

The more or less notional separation of what we may now see as real urban nature from the limited definition of the city walls during the Ming and Qing periods suggests a greater detachment of their symbolic meanings from their practical functions under the new, specific economic and social circumstances. This resulted in a more conspicuous projection of the symbolism of the city walls; the early stage of this process coincided with "the great age of Chinese wall building" (Mote 1977:137) in the first half of the Ming (cf. section 4.2), the true significance of which lies in "the primarily psychological function of reaffirming the presence of the Chinese state" (ibid.) and the re-establishment of proper social order after a century of Mongol rule. Thus, my conclusion to this section is that the apparent discrepancy between the scholar-officials' accounts preoccupied with the city and the actual distribution of urban activity and development should therefore be interpreted more as their consistency with the persisting institution of the imperial city system than as any unrealism of conception on their part. By the same token, the paradoxical phenomenon (in many cases) of the remarkable stability of the city form in time in the course of tremendous urban expansion in space may be seen as having been brought about jointly by the distinctive nature of imperial Chinese cities, the characteristic urban-rural relationship, and the symbolic significance of the city walls in society.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In discussing some of the distinctive qualities of Chinese cities, Mote (1973:59) states that "there were no zones of uniform land use" except small cities which, incapable of supporting a proliferation of commercial activities, had one "main street" or "city centre." This assertion would hold only if its application

were to be restricted to the cities which had already experienced the fundamental change characteristic of the medieval urban revolution that occurred from the mid-Tang to the Northern Song periods.[332] In the city of Suzhou, as in many other Chinese cities, a sort of "zoning" system must have existed at least until the mid-Tang. The city was divided into residential wards, market quarters and enceintes exclusively occupied by local government offices, each being enclosed by walls and separated by streets and canals. This division was largely a legacy of the normative principles of city planning in Zhou times when it evinced as much a ritual nature as its pragmatic function of city residence control. (Cf. sections 3.2.1 and 5.1.2) This system most probably reached its maturity in Suzhou by the mid-Tang, after centuries of development in continuous co-ordination with the gradual establishment of the extensive, geometrically regulated street and canal network which remained one of the most salient features of the city. It was from the late Tang onward that the city witnessed the beginning of the collapse of this system of rigid urban space division. The effects of this change between the late Tang and the early Southern Song periods were far-reaching indeed, including the replacement of the enclosed marketplaces and the walled residential wards by the free street plan in which shops could be opened anywhere within the city, and signs of the gradual growth of commercial suburbs outside the city gates, especially the areas west of Chang Gate.

What continued to be separated spatially from the rest of the city during the Southern Song and Yuan periods was the inner walled-enclosure - the prefectural government offices and the prefect's official residence. If the disappearance of the enclosed marketplaces and the walled residential wards was part of the general process of urban transformation happening in what Skinner (1977a:26) regards as "the core areas of the Lower Yangtse," the removal of this inner enclosure at the beginning of the Ming seems to have been the outcome of the specific event taking place in Suzhou alone, an event that was nevertheless not at all peculiar to the nature of the cities intrinsically formed in the political and social context of imperial China. Moreover, if the former proves to have had profound and all-encompassing impacts on urban life and the characteristics of the spatial structure of the city, the latter did not lead to any significant rearrangement of urban space except that it perhaps indirectly facilitated the concentration of government offices

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[332] A cautious wording is preferred here because of the fact of the non-contemporaneity of the effects of the medieval urban revolution in the various cities of China. (Skinner 1977a:26; see also sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3)

at various levels in the south-west part of the city, which I identify as the district of gentry and officials. Along with the formation of this district came the development of the business district in the north-west around (both inside and outside) Chang Gate and the district of family-based textile industry in the north-east, which formed the basic pattern of the partitioning of urban space of the city of Suzhou throughout the late imperial period. These three districts were not separated either physically or legally, but distinguished in the main by the respective professions of their inhabitants and by the different dominating, but never exclusive, daily activities conducted in them.

The most prominent aspect of this characteristic pattern of the partitioning of urban space of Suzhou was probably the extensive development of the area outside Chang Gate in the west wall, along the Grand Canal and the outer city moat, which I call the west suburbs. As the area of commercial and banking concentration for over four centuries until 1860, it became from the late Ming more of a *de facto* centre of inter-regional trade than the centre of business of the city itself. Whereas the concept of "suburbs" in Europe dates back to Ancient Rome, it hardly became, except for a few cases, a widely perceived phenomenon before the Industrial Revolution, in the sense not only of its being "close to urbs," as the Latin origin of the word (*suburbium*) implies,[333] but also that it was the spill-out area of the city. The situation in China was markedly different: the burgeoning suburbs as important areas of local, regional or even inter-regional trade, from as early as the Northern Song onward, constituted a common feature of all large, and probably many middle-sized, cities in the economically advanced regions.

It should be noted that the term "suburb" used here may be somewhat misleading if its Western concept were to be rigidly applied to the Chinese state of affairs. H. J. Dyos, (1961:22) in his studies of Victorian suburbs of London, defines the suburb as "in essence, . . . a decentralised part of a city with which it is inseparably linked by certain economic and social ties." The adjectival clause of this sentence obviously also speaks for the suburbs in imperial China, each sharing the

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333 The Chinese character *jiao* 郊, denoting "the area immediately outside the city," came close in Zhou times to sharing this sense of the Latin term. (See, e.g., *Er Ya*, vol. 7: "Shidi," no. 9) This meaning is reflected in the two components of the character: the one on the left, *jiao* 交, means "join" or "cross" which derived etymologically from "the crossing of one's legs;" the other on the right, *yi* 邑 (variantly written as 阝), means "city" or, more generally, "settlement." (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chaps. 6B and 10B) Thus the pictograph may be interpreted as depicting the area where the city and the wild countryside intermingle.

general trait of a modern one "which is essentially in a dependent relationship to the whole organism of the city, and the complete suburban area of a city performs only part of its total functions." (Op. cit. 24) The main sentence, however, is hardly applicable to the Chinese cases. The west suburbs of Suzhou, undoubtedly hinged upon the city but developed into a locus of inter-regional trade and business, were certainly more "central" in economic terms and more bustling in daily life - in a word, more "urban" - than most of the areas within the city walls. Consequently, they were not so much the places containing some facilities for the use of leisure or having "a meaning which was little less than idyllic," (op. cit. 22-3) as forming in effect a highly competitive environment where "every inch of land was worth a thousand taels of gold;" (XXZ, vol. B: "Furong Tang") nor were they always the places where city residents "could breathe purer suburban air and drink cleaner water" (Dyos 1961:23) - the congestion of shops, warehouses, cotton mills, dye houses, restaurants, teahouses, and so forth, inevitably made these areas more vulnerable to pollution. An official proclamation inscribed on a stele in 1737 tells us, for instance, that the river in front of Huqiu Hill was contaminated by the dye houses, and the contamination concentrated to such extent by them that its water was utterly multi-coloured, which prompted the prefectural government to issue an order prohibiting the establishment of any dye house in that area. (SLB, et al. 1981:71-3)

A tentative explanation for this probably unique phenomenon in China's urban history has been made. I have repeatedly emphasised in the preceding and present chapters that Chinese cities in the imperial era did not show the traits of the urban-rural dichotomy prevalent in pre-modern Europe. A city did not form a unity or a world of its own but served the interests of the state. It was not legally separated from its surrounding countryside; nor did it need to boast, as its medieval European counterparts could, "that the majority of its members were free citizens," (Mumford 1961:271) because the basic political, social and cultural cleavages in China, as Skinner (1977c:269) notes, were those of class and occupation and of region, not those between cities and their hinterlands; both the city residents and their country fellows of the same social class were, in principle, "working side by side on a parity." In political, social and cultural terms, a city in late imperial China was, both psychologically and practically, largely an open institution. Urban components, as long as they were not closely associated with the administration of the imperial government, did not have to be bounded by the city walls. It is therefore very possible that both this nature of China's cities and the

distinctive urban-rural continuum, both fundamentally determined by the continuing existence of a unified imperial structure, produced a necessary, though not a sufficient,[334] condition for the wide occurrence of this phenomenon in China. It is also probable that the persistence of this nature of the cities in the late imperial period, together with the prominence of the symbolic traits of the city walls, comes to account for the scholar-officials' speciously unrealistic, but actually logical, insistence on perceiving the city only as something enclosed by the city walls.

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334 Another necessary condition was the development of market economy. It was precisely the political and social transformation from the mid-Tang onward, characterised by the gradual retreat of government control over the economy, the improved social mobility and the economic growth, that created this condition.

The city was made up, apart from the city walls, moats and gates, of buildings, and the texture of urban space was determined principally by the spatial pattern of individual buildings and building complexes, and by the mode in which they formed an integral whole. Our concern with the development of urban form and space of the city of Suzhou therefore does not allow us to ignore them. Numerous works have been produced both in China and in the West on various topics, such as the history of building technology, general features of Chinese architecture, vernacular architecture, individual palace, temple and residential buildings (or building complexes), architectural details, social content of building patterns, and so forth, each constituting a gigantic task in itself. This chapter does not concern these subjects in any comprehensive way, given the serious limitations of space and time which the present research scope imposes and the vastness of these subjects. Instead, it only focuses on two issues which seem most pertinent to the subject of the thesis that I am advancing: (1) the problem concerning the relationship between form types and social functions in Chinese architecture, which constitutes one of the premises for an appropriate way of interpreting architectural features in the city of Suzhou and in other imperial Chinese cities, and (2) the significance of the ubiquitous use of the courtyard as the principal form of spatial arrangement in the city (and in all other kinds of Chinese human settlements), with special attention paid to the employment as a public urban space of the courtyard of the renowned Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan 玄妙觀.

6.1 FORM TYPES AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS IN CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

A marked disagreement can be found among scholars of traditional China on whether there existed distinctions of architectural forms between Chinese cities and the countryside. In support of his persuasive argument for the distinctive urban-rural relationship in China, Mote (1977:115-6) insists that, in the essentials of design, in building materials used, and in style and ornamentation,

> Chinese urban structures were indistinguishable from rural structures. There is in traditional Chinese architecture no such thing as a "town house" style, a "country church" style, or a "city office" style. The Chinese city did not force structures up into the air like the four- and six-story burghers' houses in old European

> cities or the tenements of ancient Rome. Nor did the pressure on space gradually remove from the city its courtyards and gardens as it tended to in Renaissance and modern Europe.

These characteristics, Mote argues, were among other aspects of Chinese life evidence of an urban-rural continuum. Skinner, (1977c:269) cautioning against neglecting the possibility of a cultural role for China's cities, has his doubts as to this kind of statement being entirely true:

> On the more prosaic level of architectural forms, Chinese cities did have their distinctive edifices: the drum tower and bell tower, the great examination hall, and the elaborate towers at the corners and gates of the city wall.

It should not be too difficult to find both statements valid if one takes the particular angle from which either of the two scholars tackles the issue. Yet architectural experience in most pre-modern societies was that conspicuous cleavages in building form are found among the buildings of different social institutions - religious or secular, and public or private, *as well as* between urban and rural structures. In this sense, if we consider this issue from the point of view of the relationship between building forms and types, and their self-contained social functions, such kinds of arguments will, *pace* Mote and Skinner, turn out to be confusing, if not entirely misleading, in the context of traditional Chinese culture. This is because, as I will try to elucidate in the following pages, major differences in Chinese architectural form and style did not lie either in the urban-rural dichotomy or, more importantly, in the differentiation of social institutions. In principle, they did not even reside in the positions of various institutions in the social hierarchy, which were reflected mainly in the modes of ornamentation and the sizes of the structures.

6.1.1 Form and Function

Of many possible approaches to studies of traditional Chinese architecture, the one that prevails in the twentieth century is to classify buildings according to social function. In many contemporary works on Chinese architectural history,[335] we find such common categories as palace buildings, temple buildings (sub-classified into those of ancestral worship, state religion, Buddhism, Daoism and popular cults), residential buildings, garden buildings, tomb buildings. This approach

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335 Cf. Liu Dunzhen 1980:*passim*; ZJB 1982:56-151; Liu Zhiping 1987:7-28; and Liu 1989:*passim*.

seems convenient when the works are focused on introducing a series of individual structures scattered in space and time. At the same time, however, it evinces its obvious weakness and fundamental ambiguity.[336] For example, in one of the contemporary works which classify Chinese buildings into palace, Buddhist temple, Daoist temple, etc., it is stated that "in general, [the form of] a Buddhist temple building or building compound was nothing but a reproduction of that of a palace or residential building," and that "the plan, form and structure of Daoist temple buildings were basically the same as those of Buddhist temple buildings, except for their lack of pagodas." (ZJB 1982:87)

The development of this approach in China is much less the outcome of the reflections of modern scholars on Chinese architecture than of an uncritical application of Western scholarship to its studies. It probably even bears some marks of the creed of Functionalism[337] originating in the late nineteenth century and prevalent in the 1920s, a line of reasoning that hardly corresponds to reality. In his investigation of the meaning of the relationship between the singularity of form and the multiplicity of functions, Aldo Rossi, (1982:46) who calls this creed "naive functionalism," insists that "any explanation of urban artifacts in terms of function must be rejected if the issue is to elucidate their structure and formation."[338] To illustrate his points, he has carefully selected a number of large, important urban artifacts in Europe, whose function has changed over time or for which a specific function does not even exist.[339] Yet if we use the word "function"

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336 Even if we apply this approach to European architecture, there is still a suspicion of its divesting architectural form of all its symbolic values, aesthetic dimensions and cultural significance, and reduces building type to a single scheme of organisation of special activities and to a diagram of circulation routes.

337 This creed is expressed in the slogan "form follows function," its invention being usually credited to Louis Henry Sullivan (1856-1924). Yet to be fair, as Norberg-Schultz (1980b:180) has noted, a study of Sullivan's writings (e.g., *Kindergarten Chats*) and buildings shows that he interpreted the words "function" and "form" liberally.

338 Rossi qualifies this statement immediately:

> This does not entail the rejection of the concept of function in its most proper sense, that is, as an algebra of values that can be known as functions of one another, nor does it deny that between functions and form one may seek to establish more complex ties than the linear ones of cause and effect (which are belied by reality itself). More specifically, we reject that conception of functionalism dictated by an ingenuous empiricism which holds that *functions bring form together* [sic] and in themselves constitute urban artifacts and architecture. (Ibid.)

339 Buildings that could have served different purposes certainly were not limited to large, important ones. Some of the ancient Greek domestic buildings at Delos, for example, are noted by Watkin (1986:40-1) for their informal and asymmetrical planning; and "with

in its broader sense, that is, extend it from the pragmatic realm to the inclusion of ideas and symbols, there should be no doubt that differentiation on the basis of social functions between building types which are physically associated with distinctive structural, constructional, spatial and ornamental forms and styles has been part of the European tradition not only in architectural discourse but also in practice from as early as the Classical period onward. On the theoretical side, Leon Battista Alberti's (1404-1472) formulation seems representative.[340] He advocates in about the mid-fifteenth century in his *De re aedificatoria*, the first book on architecture in Europe since the Augustan architect Vitruvius' *De architectura*, that each of the different parts of the state "should be designated a different type of building." (Alberti 1988:93) For him, building should first be divided into public and private, within the latter those appropriate for the higher members of society being distinguished from those for the lower members; (op.cit. 117) then both public and private should be further subdivided into sacred and profane.[341] (op.cit. 189) On the practical side, even to an unpractised eye substantial differences in architectural form are manifest, for example, between Greek temples and domestic buildings, between Roman basilicas and baths, between Gothic cathedrals and medieval tenements.

Chinese experience in this field was markedly distinguishable from that of Europe. If the concept of classification according to function, as Rossi (1982:46-8) argues in the narrow sense of the phrase,[342] is far too superficial in the studies of the pre-modern Western architecture, it should be regarded as profoundly misleading in the studies of Chinese architecture when issues concerning the structure and formation of buildings or building complexes are to be pursued. By the same token, if in many a European city one has to be "struck" by the multiplicity of functions that a large building can contain over time and how the functions are entirely independent of the form, (op.cit. 29) this kind of phenomenon, on the contrary, must always have been a taken-for-granted matter in

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its flexibility and simplicity this type was adaptable to a range of functions including inn, factory, school, or hotel as in a block south of the theatre." Yet these lines of argument should not be taken as implying the negligibility of the phenomenon that some types of buildings *did* have their exclusive use, such as the cathedral, the form of which is explicitly expressive of Christian concepts, ideas and symbols.

340 This was first brought to my attention by Mr. D. A. Vila Domini.

341 Note that at the same time as he distinguishes the various types of buildings, Alberti stresses the necessity of inquiring whether the same type of lineaments could be applied to several different uses. (Alberti 1988:5)

342 That buildings can be explained only in terms of function, and the ties between function and form are the linear ones of cause and effect.

traditional China. Whereas the most marked formal difference is found indeed between the religious and secular structures, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, between the public and private buildings, in pre-modern Europe and probably in most parts of the world, it was precisely in these areas that there was never any disjunction and dividing line in traditional Chinese (and perhaps also East Asian) architecture. In Suzhou, as in any other area of China, frequent conversion of buildings for different uses, including houses, temples, government offices, etc., is abundantly evident in the local records and thus must have been a common practice.[343]

6.1.2 The Sacred and the Profane in Chinese Architecture

In this ambiguity, one may certainly see what Needham (1971:70) calls "an outward and visible sign of the fundamental organic and integrated quality of Chinese thought and feeling." Any fruitful inquiry into the *cultural* reasons for it would constitute a special and weighty task, and inevitably call for a series of co-ordinated studies of the imperial ideology, social psychology, nature of popular beliefs, and so forth. Although I am unable to pursue such a comprehensive task in the present research, it is still worth spending a few words on one important aspect of the issue, that being the problem concerning the characteristic indistinctiveness of building types and forms of the sacred and the profane. In the eyes of Needham (op. cit. 90, note a), who sees some relation between monumentality in stone and the influence of mystical religion,

> The Chinese mood was essentially secular, loving life and Nature. Hence the gods had to conform, to sit and be worshipped in buildings identical with the halls of families and palaces, or not to be worshipped at all.

One may have to be more cautious about using the word "secular" to define the dominant Chinese attitude towards life, because there is in it a suspicion of applying

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343 Of the twenty-one Buddhist temples mentioned in the main text of the *Wudi Ji*, for instance, sixteen are recorded to have been converted from houses. Yet it should also be noted that China did not entirely lack buildings constructed in particular form and for exclusive use. The pagoda, for instance, derived form the Indian *stupa*, was in most cases a necessary part of a large Buddhist temple; in the late imperial period, however, it was also often built as a free-standing structure on a suitable hill in the countryside, principally for geomantic purposes, as its popular name *fengshui ta* 風水塔 implies, and thus totally detached itself from its original Buddhist meaning. The Temple of Heaven was probably a better example of a structure of architectural unambiguity between form and use. But it was after all a lone structure unique for any time in imperial China.

to the Chinese world the model of the religious-secular dichotomy that has long been adopted in Western scholarship. Nevertheless, even though Needham suggests this only in passing, when he discusses the reasons for the Chinese choice of building materials, the direction he takes is right. I would take it a step further and argue that the particular traditional Chinese cosmology and world view, a comprehension of which is essential for understanding the total range of Chinese culture, should be regarded as the main source of this distinctive property of Chinese architecture. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, the Chinese, at least among all *traditional* peoples, were apparently unique in having no creation myth;[344] i.e. the world and man were regarded as uncreated; they constituted the central features of a spontaneously self-generating cosmos which had no creator, god, ultimate cause, or will external to itself.[345] Consequently, as Mote (1972:12) points out,

> Whatever spiritual beings or spiritual forces the Chinese acknowledged and venerated, the limitations imposed by that cosmology were such that even a highly venerated spirit could not be dignified above all others as something external to the cosmos, not subject to its dynamic process, and as the ultimate cause behind it all, responsible for existence.[346]

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344 Unless we use the word "creation" in the more general sense of "genesis."

345 For extensive discussions on the distinctiveness of Chinese cosmogony and cosmology, and their contents, cf., e.g., Needham 1956, Mote 1971 and 1972, Henderson 1984, Graham 1989.

346 While emphasising the distinctiveness of Chinese cosmology, Mote (1972:13-4) does not ignore the existence of differences between popular religion and the religious elements preserved in the documents of the Great Tradition. For early periods, he suggests that any theistic tendencies in popular religious practices must have been greatly weakened by the failure (or inability) of the Great Tradition to support them on the higher level of rationalisation. For later periods, he believes that the active possibility of social mobility kept the different levels of cultural life coherent and congruent, if not truly identical in quality and character, and that the capacity of a Great Tradition to exert the influence of broadened versions of its essential characteristics upon the popular culture was greater in China than in closed societies. Watson (1985:292-3) presents, though from a different angle, a similar point on the phenomenon of a remarkably high level of cultural integration in late imperial China, as compared with that of nineteenth-century France. To treat popular religion merely as a mirror image of the religious dimension of the elite culture would certainly be far too simplistic. As Schwartz (1985:411) has suggested, "if we survey the entire landscape of the diffuse religion of the people over the ages we can also, in fact, find powerful and persistent resistance to all efforts to subordinate the realm of the numinous and divine, either to the claims of the political order or even to some all-embracing conception of cosmic order." But the prevalent influence of "the genuine Chinese cosmology" on the general tone of people's material and spiritual life is beyond any doubt. As for the process of interactions between Chinese and foreign cultures, Mote (1972:7) writes:

> Other fundamentally different cosmogonies presenting the idea of a creation and a creator external to the created world, when encountered by the Chinese among South China minorities, or in successive contacts with Indian, Islamic, and Christian thought, made no significant

Spirits and gods were then regarded as having the same qualities and as being subject to the same processes as all other aspects (including human beings) of Nature; in more simple words, Man and God were equally part of the cosmos. Since the cosmic position of gods was basically the same as, if, indeed, not lower than, that of human beings,[347] there was then no point for an architectonic structure accommodating the former to be conceived and constructed differently from a building for the latter.

As for the relationship between the human and the divine, the views representative of the literati's can be found in the *Zuo Zhuan*,[348] where it is asserted on several occasions that the people are the masters (*zhu* 主) of the gods (*shen* 神) in the sense that the gods' temperament varies in correspondence with the conditions of the people, and that to promote the people's achievements means

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> impression on the Chinese mind. Their own indigenous conception of the world, shared subsequently by all Chinese schools of thought on the level of the Great Tradition - and it is a conception having pervasive influence throughout the entire society - has been developed throughout the continuous cultural history of the Chinese with no modification save its refinement and detailed articulation.

Although vulgarised Buddhist notions of transmigration and karma found their niche in the popular culture, the Chinese world view which kept people's attention on life here and now nevertheless remained unchallenged.

347 It is our understanding that Confucianism in the course of its development remained (and probably will still continue to be) the principal guide to Chinese civilisation. It was, in Needham's (1956:5) words, "a doctrine of this-worldly social-mindedness." Mote (1971:45) goes further to suggest that "the absolute primacy of humanistic ethics in a man-centred world may be taken as the ultimate touchstone of Confucianism." Indeed, in Chinese thought, Man was always given a pre-eminent position as compared to the other myriad categories of things and beings in the world. It is explicitly stated, for instance, in Xu Shen's *Shuowen Jiezi* (chap. 10B) that Man is one of the three primary powers of the cosmos - Heaven, Earth and Man. As Freedman (1979a:191) points out, although Man "may not be as important as Heaven and Earth, he is an essential element in the trinity." It is interesting and important to note that Xu's statement was most probably derived from a similar line in the *Lao Zi* (chap. 25, in Chen 1984:163), the first complete and self-contained work of Daoism. The only difference between these two statements is that, in the *Lao Zi*, there are four, instead of three, fundamental components of the cosmos, i.e. the *Dao* (which we may interpret as the cosmic Order, or, by borrowing Mote's [1971:74] words, "the great Way of nature and cosmos"), Heaven, Earth, and Man. As the chief rival philosophical school of Confucianism, Daoism offers complementary views of life to those of Confucianism and thus presents another side of the Chinese mind. Yet of many other mutually shared characteristics and views, the "worldliness" in the sense that human beings (emphasising either their social properties in the case of the Confucians or their natural properties in the case of the Daoists) are held as fundamental to the cosmos as Heaven and Earth, is one which both schools have in common.

348 Vol. 6: "Duke Huan 6th Year;" cf. vol. 10: "Duke Zhuan 32nd Year" and vol. 14: "Duke Xi 19th Year" with Du and Kong's commentaries.

simultaneously to be reverent to the gods. Hence even "the sage king first helped the people to make achievements, then offered sacrifices to the gods afterwards," a passage quoted earlier in section 2.4.2, above. In every aspect of social life, gods were not necessarily given priority of attention by intellectuals and scholar-officials[349] who as a social group formed the major force in perpetuating a civilisation that we now recognise as Chinese. The gods' worldly dwelling may, in a sense, be interpreted as at the mercy of the humans, since they effectively lodged under the human roof. It is very possible, then, that in the Chinese world the primarily immanent qualities of the divine, the dominance of Confucian humanistic values, and the overwhelmingly worldly concerns may have been three of the main factors which jointly made unnecessary any attempt to build a sacred structure in any specific form that could be sharply differentiated from that of domestic buildings.

Technically, however, Chinese buildings and building complexes were ever ready to cater for as many functions as possible. This high adaptability of the Chinese buildings was inherent in the principles of their structural composition and spatial arrangement. As Needham (1971:65) has noted, in spite of early knowledge of arch and vault, masonry and brickwork were always confined to terraces, defensive works, walls, tombs and pagodas;[350] and no Chinese house could

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349 This attitude of the literati toward gods in relation to people is more vividly revealed, to varied extents and in various manners, in their leisurely records of historic events and remarks on them. Yang Xunji, for example, records an interesting story about a Ming scholar-official named Zhou Wenxiang 周文襄 who was fond of visiting Buddhist temples:

> Every time he arrived at the main hall of a temple, he prostrated himself in front of the Buddha [image]. When he was censured for it by others, [Zhou] Wenxiang replied with a smile, "If we consider him [Buddha] in terms of age, he is about two or three thousand years older than I am. Would not even he deserve some tribute?" (*Su Tan*: "Wenxiang Fo Jue")

For those "other" people, this habit of Zhou's was absurd enough to be scoffed at. For Zhou himself, on the other hand, whether or not he seriously believed in Buddhism, he had to defend his habit slyly in secular terms of respect for the elders, a universal norm of morality in traditional China. In another direction, Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821-1907) in his *Chaxiangshi Congchao* 茶香室叢鈔 (*Si Chao*, vol. 20) expresses his views on the relationship between humans and the gods, by quoting another scholar's remarks on the proliferation of cults derived from some of the fabled figures in Ming fiction:

> From this [the proliferation of the new cults] we know that the gods accord with the will of the people, and there is no actual need for their existence. (Quoted in Zong and Liu 1987:"Introduction," p. 8)

350 From as early as the Northern Song onward, masonry was also applied to bridges. "The prevailing styles and modes of Chinese architecture," Mote (1973:63: note 18) suggests, "appear to represent choices made in consciousness of alternatives." This seems to correspond to Rapoport's (1969:24) nicely phrased point as he argues against

be a proper dwelling for the living, or a proper place of worship for the gods, unless it were built in wood and roofed with tile.[351] The most typical Chinese building was a rectangular hall on an elevated platform, with its wooden columns joined together in a complex trabeate system, and its walls always as curtain walls rather than bearing walls in the support of the structure. Consequently, such a timber frame and the screen walls not only provided large spans, compact supports, maximal unobstructed space, standardisation of planning, and flexibility of use, but at the same time made the basic ground-plan capable of expansion in all directions. (Needham 1971:65-6)

Among these traits of Chinese buildings, the one that needs to be emphasised is the standardisation of planning and construction. In terms of structure, all measurements of a building were derived as multiples of a particular proportion, i.e. the elevation of the horizontal corbel bracket arm (*gong* 栱) in the Song, or the width of the mortise of the bracket (*doukou* 斗口) in the Qing, which functioned as a standard module;[352] in terms of individual buildings, the fundamental, repeating unit of space, keyed to the size and scale of human beings, was the *jian* 間[353] or bay - the pillar interval, which was manipulated at will to give shape to all buildings and the size of which was pre-determined by the standard module;[354] and in terms

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technological determinism of building form: "The determinist view neglects the *idea* [sic] of the house; just because man can do something does not mean that he will."

351 We may recall that, when the king of Yue, Goujian 勾踐, spent his three-year hostageship in Helü Dacheng, he was hostilely accommodated with his wife and his chief minister, Fan Li 范蠡, in stone rooms (*shishi* 石室) rather than in an appropriate timber abode. (See section 1.1.3)

352 The module was relative dimension having a certain range of actual measurements so as to be applied to buildings of different sizes and importance. In Song times, for instance, it was classified into eight grades; in the Qing, eleven grades. For the Song and Qing systems, cf. ZJB 1982:170 & 190; WWBK 1983:15-6; JYCGBW 1988:30 "Caifen," 117-20 "Bracket system" and "Doukou."

353 The character *jian* is currently composed of two elements: one is for the "door" (*men* 門), the other for "the sun" (*ri* 日) placed inside the former. In earlier times, however, the element inside was *yue* 月, i.e. "the moon," instead of *ri*. According to Duan Yucai, its connotations, including that of "bay," were probably derived from its original, basic denotation of "crevice." (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chap. 12A) Xu Kai 徐鍇 (920-974) once interpreted the character *jian* 閒 in a semantic sense: "When the door is closed at night and the moonlight is seen [from inside], it is certain that there is a crevice [between the door and the wall]." (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 12A with Xu Xuan's commentary) One may be tempted to suggest in the light of Xu Kai's interpretation that the concepts of the relationship between Heaven and Earth, between Nature and Man, between time and space, and between the outside and the inside, were all embedded in *jian* as the basic spatial unit of Chinese buildings. (Xu 1989:71)

354 For a more detailed discussion of *jian* as a unit of space in vernacular architecture in Zhejiang 浙江 province, see Knapp 1989:33-6.

of building groups, it was the courtyard (*ting* 庭, *yuan* 院 or *tingyuan* 庭院), its measurements being closely associated with those of the buildings located in it, that in principle was arranged, by repetition, to compose, sometimes in a very complex way, a walled compound. The courtyard and gardens, if any, were always an integral part of the building compound rather than something additional and separate. Needham (1971:68) argues that none of the modulars of variable absolute size were ever out of scale with human beings, and that, by this working norm,[355] right proportion was safeguarded, and relational harmony preserved, whatever the magnitude of the structures. One can hardly deny that these statements are true. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that one of the major technical outcomes of these principles of construction was the markedly high adaptability of such structures to diverse uses: since no part of the weight of the roof or structural beams was taken by the walls, not only was complete freedom attained for the placing of doors and windows, but a building could be remodelled and, as happened more often, its internal space could be rearranged at will to suit particular purposes without any danger of collapse.

6.1.3 Building Compounds and Social Institutions

Yet it would be wrong to say that all Chinese buildings were uniform and that no differentiation was made with regard to form types in Chinese architecture. Leaving aside the pagoda derived from the ancient Indian *stupa*, the technical principles of which were, as Needham (1971:140-1) puts it, "really only the extension of the techniques of all building to a particular specialised field," individual buildings which we regard as indigenous Chinese ones were traditionally categorised according to three intertwined criteria - form, location (or sometimes position) and function. Thus in many written works on architectonic structures and building techniques produced in the imperial era, such as the *Yingzao Fashi*, *Yuan Ye* and the "Kao Gong" section of the *Gujin Tushu Jicheng*, we are frequently confronted with over a dozen types.[356] To illustrate my point, I here only select four of them

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355 Comparing with Le Corbusier's "modular," Needham (1971:67) believes that the harmonious assembly of units each fixed to the human scale is even more deeply Chinese, because it was universally, not occasionally, practised in Chinese civilisation, a working norm rather than an aesthetic theory. It produced "the sober humanism of the Chinese style."

356 As Liu Zhiping (1987:37) has indicated, discernible distinction among some of those types of buildings in their form and function, such as *xuan* 軒, *xie* 榭, *zhai* 齋 and *guan* 館, gradually became blurred in the late imperial period.

which appear most distinguishable to us[357] in terms of their forms: (1) main halls (*dian* 殿, *tang* 堂 and *ting* 廳),[358] (2) halls of two or more storeys (*lou* 樓 and *ge* 閣),[359] (3) pavilions (*ting* 亭), and (4) galleries or free-standing corridors (*lang* 廊). The spatial functions and patterns of daily use of these structures obviously varied significantly; so did their physical forms, although they were built under the same principle of construction.

However, each of these buildings was not, apart from a few exceptional cases,[360] supposed as standing alone as a self-assertive structure independent of

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357 When Amos Rapoport insists in his *House Form and Culture* (1969:8-9) - an "original work," as Professor Knapp (1989:xi) calls it, of interpretation of the ways in which people around the world organise and use space - that in "primitive" and peasant societies, "there is no separation among man's life, work, and religion, and very little differentiation, if any, between the sacred and the profane," one should find no difficulty in sharing his point of view. But when he extends from this to state that, in contrast to the high specialisation in most fields of modern societies, "lack of differentiation in the forms and construction of buildings is an expression of the general lack of differentiation typical of primitive and even peasant societies," and that this characteristic of no, or limited, differentiation also applies to the way in which space is used, one is bound to question the validity of his argument. Rapoport's latter statements obviously represent an evolutionary view of "a process of differentiation that changes from primitive to vernacular and then to industrial vernacular and modern," a judgement of the modes of life of traditional societies according to the standard of classification in the context of our, or modern, societies. The fact is, however, that people of primitive societies (in the "traditional" rather than "less civilised" sense of the word) differentiate and classify myriad things in no less complex manners than, but simply different from, ours. In the *Er Ya*, (vol. 5: "Shigong," no. 5) a dictionary first compiled in Zhou times, for example, each of the four corners of a room is differentiated from the rest with a peculiar name - a classification which we now lack but which had meanings and values in itself for the ancients, reflecting their way of perceiving and conceiving the world, and of using space. Thus, if we are to understand the life - including architecture - of a traditional people, it is imperative to interpret its various aspects in their terms, rather than to account for its speciously mooted "incapacity" to come up with the "vantage point" of ours. It is also worth pointing out in passing that the diversity of architectural forms (and styles) of our times is not the only outcome of the "process of differentiation in building types and spaces, the building process, and the trades involved;" (Rapoport 1969:8) the interaction between technological progress and cultural freedom, fuelled by a widening appreciation of self-expression and individualistic creativity, has also led to this unique phenomenon of modern (especially Western) societies.

358 *Dian* was denominative only of the main halls of imperial palaces, and of the important halls of temples. The main halls of houses, ancestral temples, local government offices and gardens were instead called *tang* or *ting*. (Liu 1987:33-6)

359 Needham (1971:62) strangely interprets *lou* as "pavilions of more than two storeys," and *ge* as "halls of two storeys." I would agree with Liu Zhiping (1987:31-2) that *lou* and *ge* basically were not different from each other in form and structure, but *lou* were usually used for human accommodation, whereas *ge* were often for storage. Apart from the cases, such as small houses in particular, in which choice was limited by unfavourable conditions, the structures of over one storey were invariably placed in unimportant positions and often away from the main axis of the compound.

360 Notable cases were the drum and bell towers in many cities, the towers at the

other structures; instead, it was considered as being incorporated in a building compound designated to a certain social establishment,[361] whether it be a palace, a local government office, a school, a house, or a temple. In other words, an individual building (e.g., a hall, a corridor or a pavilion) distinguishable in form from others should not be perceived as an entity of its own if that means that it is to be taken as a particular structure that in itself exclusively served the purposes, and was thus a physical embodiment, of a particular social institution; on the contrary, it should be seen as an integral element of a larger composition in which it performed its functions in harmony with other elements. Suppose a building compound was destroyed by fire or in a war and only the main hall survived, this remaining structure would have lost all its practical and social meanings unless some other elements were re-constructed to form a new walled-compound of which the hall once again formed a part. Thus, in terms of social functions, architectural and, especially, spatial, integrity existed less in each of the individual structures than in an identifiable group of buildings enclosed by walls; individual structures were meaningful only if they existed and played their distinctive roles in relation to each other. Various social establishments - palaces, government offices, temples, schools, houses, etc. - were lodged in such compounds which resembled each other and were characterised by their elasticity and flexibility of use. That building forms and types should be closely associated with social institutions is basically a European concept - the Church had its distinctive Christian structures, the municipal government had its town halls, economically less advantaged citizens had their tenement-houses, to name a few; but it was precisely this kind of formal bond between building types and social institutions that traditional Chinese society lacked.

Building compounds of different social institutions in the built-environments of traditional China were of course by no means visually monotonous and indistinguishable. A Chinese person would usually have no difficulty in telling at

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corners and gates of the city wall, and watch towers in some towns and large villages. Although free-standing pavilions were often found in the countryside or scenic spots, they certainly did not constitute by themselves any social institutions; nor did the small, shabby individual buildings scattered in the rural areas, serving as the shrines of certain local deities.

361 An individual building of a certain type in the compound of one particular social institution often varied significantly in spatial function, this variation being closely associated with the pattern of its distinctive daily use, from a building of the same type in the compound of another social institution. As has been mentioned earlier, the internal spatial arrangement of a "hall" in a Buddhist temple was markedly different from that in a domestic building complex. But their architectural form and structure remained the same.

first glance whether a compound was a *yamen*, a temple, a house, or even a prefectural school. Yet such differentiation in general was not made on the basis of its building form and type. It is true that there were some important formal features of the building compound that functioned as overt indicators of the social rank of the particular institution which it housed, the most notable ones being its magnitude and the form of the roofs of its individual buildings.[362] Every institution was hierarchically positioned in society, this hierarchy being manifested in many features of its buildings - the formal standard of a *yamen* buildings, for instance, was usually higher than that of many houses of ordinary people, and thus could easily be identified. Yet since a certain range of institutions would be designated to the same hierarchical position, there would be little difference between the magnitude and the form of the roofs of the individual buildings of a *yamen*, and those of a compound in which an official of a high rank resided or of a large Buddhist or Daoist temple. Thus the basic cleavages in building form in a certain sub-cultural region[363] were those of social hierarchy, not those between diverse social institutions.[364]

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362 Although no official text is found in the pre-Tang era on the codes of regulating the hierarchical standard of buildings according to the residents' social rank, one is probably not wrong in assuming the existence of this kind of stipulations in the early imperial period. From the Tang onwards, however, sumptuary laws are recorded to regulate not only by the number of pillar intervals or bay (*jian*) the sizes of the buildings in which commoners, nobles and officials of different ranks were entitled to dwell, but also the modes of their ornamentation and materials for decoration. See Liu 1990:35, 53 & 75 for quotations of such laws from the "Yufu 輿服" sections of those documents on the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing institutions and histories. Roofs constituted one of the most salient elements of Chinese buildings. In fact, such great emphasis was placed on the roof that a range of form types were developed to signify the importance of an individual building. For an illustration of various types of roofs, see Liu 1980:15-6, figures 8-1 & 8-2; for a brief description of a number of form types of the roof, see Liu 1987:105-8.

363 One should certainly not ignore the regional differences in building forms. Indeed several fairly unique types of domestic buildings can be found, such as the cave dwellings excavated in the loess hillsides in north-west China, and the fortified, three- or four-storey clan community houses of the Hakka (Kejia 客家) people in Fujian 福建, built on the basis of either rectangular or circular plans, with their inward-facing individual family "apartments" looking down on a central communal courtyard. But the majority of Chinese domestic buildings undoubtedly shared the same planning, structure and construction principles, and thus retained similar forms, although they usually evinced characteristic regional styles reflected in the curvature of the roof, materials applied to the facing of the building wall, and so forth. Hence even if we were to extend the statement to refer to the entire Chinese cultural sphere, the argument would still largely hold. It is also interesting to note that the higher the social rank of an institution, the less distinctive was the regional style shown in the buildings of the compound that housed that institution.

364 The pagoda was indeed a unique type of structure that could have come to be one of the prime elements signalling a Buddhist temple. However, many a Buddhist temple did not actually have a pagoda; moreover, as has been stated earlier, such a structure in the late imperial period was often built free-standing in the countryside, probably for geomantic

For a very few instances, some slight but symbolically significant changes in the layout of a specific compound of a certain social institution *did* contribute to its distinctiveness;[365] but for the majority of the cases, it was the distinctive mode of ornamentation and arrangement of symbolic objects applied to the compound, and the disposition of the particular apparatus pertaining to the social functions of that institution, that jointly rendered it visually distinguishable from the compounds of other institutions. To enumerate and analyse comprehensively various conventional modes of these "sub-level" architectural arrangements which helped to reveal the social functions of different building compounds, is an important task but falls beyond the scope of the present topic. Suffice it here to mention two conspicuous examples in the Qing dynasty Suzhou. A Buddhist or Daoist temple was most notable for its yellow-painted walls, arched gates at its main entrance (*shanmen* 山門, especially of a large temple), peculiar shapes of some of its windows, disposition of incense burners and other utensils in its courtyard, etc. From a picture of the Buddhist temple at the foot of Tiger Hill (Huqiu 虎丘), which I adapt from a section of the 1759 scroll to Figure 6-1, we can clearly see at least the first three of these features. Figure 6-2 contains another section of the scroll depicting the compound of the provincial government offices of Jiangsu. As in the case of other local *yamen*, it was characterised by the palings and wooden gates (*yuanmen* 轅門) demarcating a prohibited area on the front street, the two pavilions (*chuiguting* 吹鼓亭) on both sides of the main entrance, where the brass players would perform on ceremonial occasions, and the double flagstaffs flying the banners as part of the insignia of the local authority, on which the appellation of the *yamen* was printed.[366] It was also the atmosphere created by people's activities in and around the compound, linking closely to the social performances of the institution lodged in it, that profoundly

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purposes, and thus had nothing to do with Buddhism in terms of its peculiar social and religious functions.

365 A good example was the prefectural or county school-temple which was often marked by the placement of the honorific gateways (*lingxingmen* 欞星門) in its main courtyard near the entrance, the possible employment of the semi-circular ponds (*panchi* 泮池), and the inward-opening colonnaded galleries flanking the courtyard, in which steles were installed to commemorate admired scholars of the past. Yet again, the principle of the spatial arrangement and the building forms of the compound were basically the same as others.

366 One should not disregard the function of the huge *pai'e* 牌額, i.e. a wooden or metal board fixed on the lintel of the front gate of a compound (except that of ordinary houses) and of the front door of each of its main halls, on which the name or title of the compound or the hall was inscribed. This alone was certainly not of any help to the illiterate, but would have proved very informative for the men and women who could read.

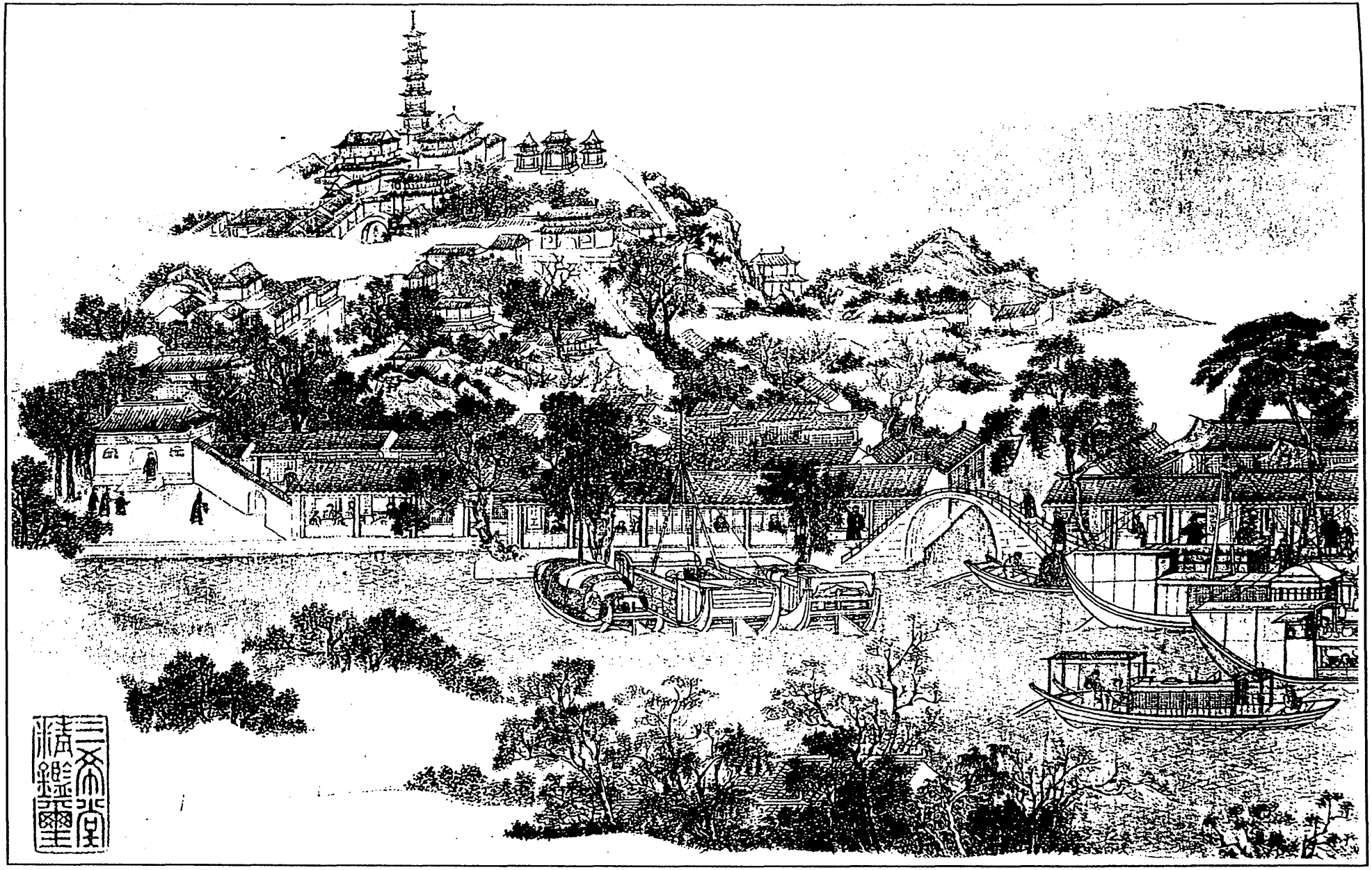

Figure 6-1 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting the Buddhist temple on Tiger Hill. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 80.

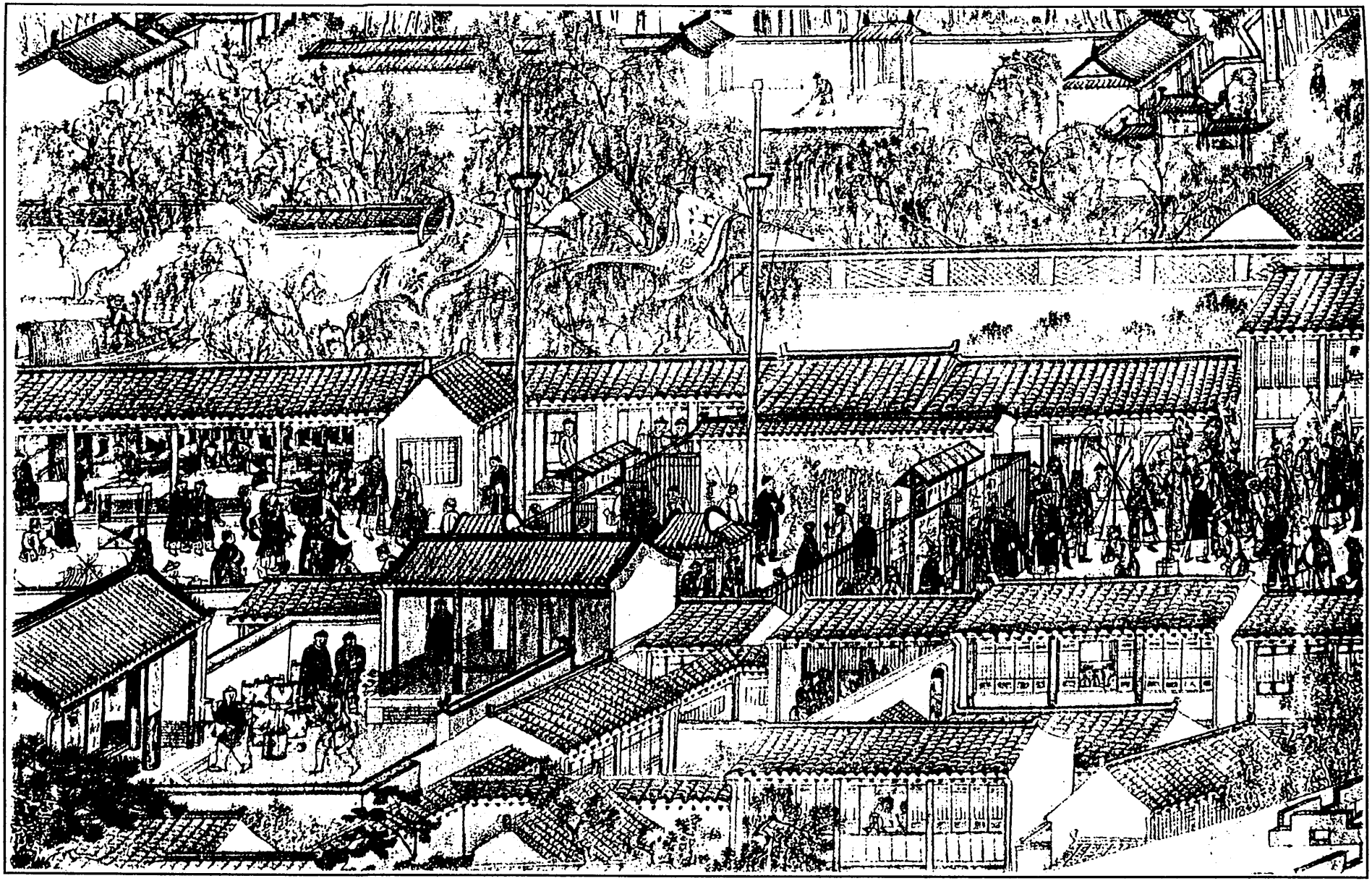

Figure 6-2 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting the compound of the provincial government offices and its front street. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 56.

reinforced such differentiation.[367]

6.1.4 Urban-rural Continuum

Now the time has come for us to return to the issue which we introduced in the opening passages of this section; that is, how should we perceive and interpret traditional Chinese urban buildings and their architectural forms in relation to rural ones. If we are to insist on the existence of distinctive architectonic structures in Chinese cities, the few examples given by Skinner seem, *prima facie*, to constitute convincing evidence in support of this view. The towers at the corners and gates of the city wall, for instance, when perceived *together with* the walls on which they were standing, could be regarded as distinctive city structures. This is indeed suggested by their Chinese names: *jiaolou* 角樓 (lit. "halls of [usually] two storeys at the corners [of the city wall]) and *chenglou* 城樓 (lit. "halls of [usually] two storeys at [the gates of] the city wall") or, more accurately, *chengmenlou* 城門樓 (lit. "halls of [usually] two storeys at the gates of the city wall").[368] Since the character *cheng* 城 was, especially in the second half of the imperial era, an exclusive word for both city-walls and cities, buildings called by these names could not be anywhere but on top of the city walls. Paradoxically, however, these Chinese words at the same time imply that each of these structures was perceived less as an integrated whole than as two separate entities - the *cheng* and the *lou* - combined together, which faithfully corresponded to these structures' architectural features. The one- or two-storey hall as a part of such a structure was, in terms of building form and style, basically not at all different from those on the ground, existing in various compounds within the city or without;[369] rather, it was the city wall,

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367 Even in everyday ordinary times, the toll of the temple bells, the peculiar percussion of the tapping of the "wooden fish" (*muyu* 木魚), the sound of chanting, and the smoke and smell of the burning incense would immediately suggest to any passer-by that a Buddhist temple was probably not far away. By the same token, the runners, guards, executioners strolling in official costumes, the noise of summoning and dispatching servants, and placards displayed on the walls and palings, would unmistakably proclaim the compound in front of one's eyes a *yamen*.

368 It should be noted that, in many cases, these *lou* 樓 were only one-storey halls. Probably because they were in early times often halls of two or more storeys, or because they stood on the lofty walls instead of on the level ground, the word *lou* was invariably used for them regardless of the number of their storeys. All the gate towers of the city of Suzhou were called *lou*, whereas on the 1759 scroll, of the four gates Xu Yang portrayed, only the one above Chang Gate was a two-storey hall.

369 The towers on the city walls were unsurprisingly "elaborate" structures. But there is no reason to assume that they were more elaborate than the main buildings of large temples in rural areas and remote mountains; even if they were, which was not the case in reality, should the extent of elaboration be considered as a criterion for differentiating

standing, and therefore being perceived, as a complete, self-assertive artifact,[370] that rendered them distinct from rural structures.

This argument can to some extent also be applied to the drum and bell towers that are found in so many cities in traditional China, although, as independent structures built *ab ovo*, they were absent in the city of Suzhou.[371] A structure of this kind was again the combination of two elements: a multi-storey (usually two-storey) hall, and a high raised, solidly constructed platform on which the hall stood. Their Chinese names - *gulou* (lit. "a multi-storey hall with a drum in it") and *zhonglou* (lit. "a multi-storey hall with a bell") - do not signify the separation of the halls from the platforms, nor the combination of the two, but in essence have derived from and therefore denote the *lou* only, which, in form, style and materials used, were not different from any other halls. On the other hand, the platforms that elevated the halls, by the same criteria, resembled city walls; and this resemblance was probably the crucial feature which made the drum and bell tower entitled to be urban structures. To put it in another way, whether these halls were to be regarded as peculiar structures of the city was not physically determined by their own architectural forms, but by the construction of the city wall-like platforms on which they assumed their functions and from which they acquired their very name "the drum and bell towers."[372] In this sense, the specific cases of using the gate

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building types?

370 Whereas it was felt that the gates of important cities should preferably be topped with gate-towers or, as the Chinese called them, *chengmenlou*, this practice was far from a mandatory one throughout history. Among the gates of the city of Suzhou before the late Yuan, probably only two had ever had such *lou*. The 1229 city map registered on itself just one gate on which a tower is portrayed. It should be noted that, in various texts produced during the pre-Ming period, such as the *Yue Jue Shu*, *Wudi Ji*, *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, *Wujun Zhi* and *Pingjiang Jishi*, this information is revealed to us not by the kind of statement as "which gates do *not* have *lou*" but by statements as to "which gate *does* have a *lou*." This point is important, for, although the gates with towers built on them were admired by the imperial scholars, the towers were considered noteworthy and, *a posteriori*, may not have been regarded as an obligatory element for the former. It was from 1353 onwards, when the city walls of Suzhou were rebuilt, that its gates were all topped with *lou* (see section 4.5). Hence even if the practice of constructing a *lou* above every city gate became normative, which we can assume only with little certainty, it only happened in the late imperial period.

371 The tower of the south gate of the ruined inner enclosure in the early Ming and the towers over the gates of the city walls in the late Ming and early Qing were successively used as, and called, drum towers. (See section 4.5)

372 Structures that had similar functions to the drum and bell towers of the cities can be found in some market towns. They were certainly much less elaborate than their urban counterparts, and, more importantly, they were often raised not on solid platforms but on wooden stilts. A good example of these can be found at the centre of a market town, Chengcun 城村, of Chong'an 崇安 county in the north of Fujian. (Guan 1988:8, fig. 1)

towers as drum towers by the city of Suzhou were entirely consistent with the architectural reality in traditional China. After all, the city walls were the one and only distinctive *type* of architectonic structure that, in name and in fact, symbolised the presence of government and defined cities as places where the government was centred as against the open countryside.

As for the examination hall, invariably located in the city, it seems more obvious that this hall was hardly at variance in architectural form and style with the halls of other social functions. From the section of the 1759 scroll which I have presented earlier, in Figure 5-13, depicting the quarter of the city of Suzhou around the provincial examination compound, we can see that the examination halls were indistinguishable in general from the buildings along the street outside their compound, although the former appear to be larger and taller than the latter. Even that these particular halls were elongated structures composed of more bays than ordinary ones was not a unique feature: many large private schools located in either urban or rural areas had, in their compounds, structures sharing the same characteristics. As I have acknowledged earlier, all the examples cited by Skinner - especially the drum and bell towers, and the towers at the corners and gates of the city wall - were indeed edifices of the city. They fulfilled the function of the city and together reflected its nature. Yet as architectural objects, they did not in their form and style represent the city; it would be more true if we see this relationship conversely: it was the city, symbolised eminently by its walls, that gave rise to their distinctiveness in name and function. The characteristic property of Chinese architecture in lacking any formal bond between building types and social institutions, fundamentally made impossible and unnecessary the manifestation of any cultural role for China's cities, no matter how significant it was, in the uniqueness of their building forms and styles.

This last argument is crucial for clarifying a possibly problematic line of reasoning revealed in Mote's statement introduced at the beginning of this section. It should be stressed that my slight doubt does not concern the scholar's essential point that a distinctive urban-rural continuum existed in traditional China, nor does it concern the objectivity of his valid observation that the forms and styles of Chinese urban and rural buildings were indistinguishable, which, in general, truly corresponds to the real picture of the architectural landscape of traditional China. Instead, it emerges from the question of whether one could use this observation, though correct in itself, as a piece of evidence on which, to paraphrase Mote,

(1977:119) rests the case for the Chinese urban-rural relationship; that is, from the validity of such a statement, expressed also by Mote (op. cit. 116) as "the continuum from city to suburbs to open countryside thus *was embodied in* the uniformity of building styles and layout and in the use of ground space." (The emphasis in italics is mine) This line of reasoning fundamentally presupposes that a building would profoundly differ in form and style from others according to its distinctive social functions. Such a presupposition is self-evidently applicable to most cases in the West and many other parts of the world, but not to traditional China, because, as I have argued extensively, an absence of formal bond between building types and social institutions long ago became one of the intrinsic traits of Chinese architecture.

A possible logical difficulty would ensue from any forceful application of this presupposition to the social dimension of Chinese architecture. Were the uniformity of building forms and styles to be taken as *ipso facto* evidence of the urban-rural continuum, should it equally be regarded as evidence of a similar "continuum" across diverse social institutions, such as temples, government offices, schools, houses, etc., each being lodged in a building compound that resembled others in form and style; or should we expect that there was little to separate these institutions in social-psychological terms? Certain kindred natures were undoubtedly shared by all these institutions, but was not the contrast between, for instance, a government office in the city and a Buddhist temple in a remote mountain, more remarkable in their social functions and people's attitudes towards them than the contrast between city and village, whereas their building forms and styles were basically the same? Even if we were to see some parallels between the socio-psychological aspects of urban-rural relationship and the relationship between different social institutions, the uniformity of building forms and styles bore evidence of nothing more essential than the distinctive Chinese conception of the cosmic position of human beings and, in Needham's words quoted earlier, "the fundamental organic and integrated quality of Chinese thought and feeling."

6.1.5 Building in Time

The reader may have noticed that this issue has not explicitly been discussed with respect to the dimension of time. One reason for this is that, because of the paucity of written and pictorial materials, we are far from certain of the way in which the urban space of the city of Suzhou was organised with regard to buildings

and courtyard compounds, and of the mode in which people were using it in pre-Southern Song times as opposed to the late imperial era.[373] Changes in urban spatial texture and city life brought about by medieval urban revolution were so profound that what we have presented in this chapter, being merely a few segments of the whole spectrum of the city in the Ming and Qing periods, should not be taken as speaking for the entire imperial era. Another reason comes from the realisation that Chinese architecture as a distinctive system of the art of building, taking form as early as the Han period, (Liu 1980:2) evinced a remarkable continuity throughout subsequent history, a continuity evidenced in architectural form and style, in building materials and techniques, and in general principles of construction. On the other hand, few Chinese cities were cities of stone; structures in them were built with relatively ephemeral materials - mostly timber, and often with astonishing speed, resulting in the scarcity in a city, at any historical stage, of buildings that had survived from earlier times. Consequently, they did not show the kind of architectural diversity generated by the succession of historical periods that so much characterised their European counterparts; instead, they were, as purely physical objects, characteristic of what Mote (1977:117) calls "a continuum in time" in the city.[374] An understanding of this particular characteristic will

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373 We do not know, for example, exactly how domestic buildings and courtyards were arranged within a residential ward enclosed by walls, nor do we have sufficient knowledge about the everyday activities in Xuanmiao Guan and other temples in the Tang and earlier.

374 Mote (1977:116-7) emphasises this point by referring to Mumford's (1938:4) observations on the cities of Europe:

> The Chinese city did not possess visible "diversity of its time-structures." Time did not challenge time in the eyes of a wanderer in a city street in traditional China. In China there was no danger of the past not preserving itself; but neither did the architectural monuments remind one of the past, because architecturally the present was never strikingly new or different. No Chinese building was obviously datable in terms of period styles. No traditional Chinese city ever had a Romanesque or a Gothic past to be overlaid in a burst of classical renascence, of a Victorian nightmare to be scorned in an age of aggressive functionalism. In that sense, the Chinese city did not escape "the tyranny of a single present," but neither did it consider "a future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past" to be monotonous.

It is important to note that it would be wrong to regard Chinese architecture as invariable in time. "Continuity" indicates change rather than stagnation. To the eye of a trained architect or archaeologist, a building of the Tang period would be evidently different in its form, structure and ornamentation from a building of the Ming or Qing. For authentication of old Chinese buildings, I propose to refer, among many others, to Qi Yingtao's very informative pamphlet *Zenyang Jianding Gujianzhu.* (1981) Yet Mote's essential point holds, especially as he carefully weighs his words by adding such adverbs as "strikingly" and "obviously," because such changes came so gradually that visible diversity of time-structures could hardly have been detected by the contemporary Chinese.

further strengthen the first point that I have developed in the preceding section, i.e. a lack of formal bond between building types and social institutions in Chinese architectural tradition was principally responsible for the relative uniformity of building styles and layout in both urban and rural areas.

Mumford's (1961:98) statement that "the city unites times past, times present, and times to come" is undoubtedly applicable to Chinese cases. Yet such unity was achieved, not through the cities' "durable buildings and institutional structures," but through something else. Discussions of this subject by Wright (1965) and Mote (1973) are highly enlightening. Wright, (1965:676-9) thirty years ago, presented the imperial capitals of the Han, Sui and Tang at Chang'an as *urbs ephemera*, as compared with imperial Rome, termed an *urbs aeterna*. In the most ephemeral building materials used, the similar techniques of construction employed across a period of seven centuries, and the striking speed with which major building enterprises were carried out, he sees the construction of Chang'an as representing "an architecture of planned ephemerality." (Op. cit. 677) This phrase suggests a conscious choice in various modes of construction; and there is indeed ample evidence that Chinese building skills included elements not unlike those of the Greeks and the Romans in areas of engineering, in their understanding of the principles of the arch and the barrel vault, and in their techniques of masonry construction.[375] Wright thus argues that the question why Chang'an was

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375 Wright believes that there are two corollaries to this architecture of planned ephemerality; namely that the city of Chang'an contained, apart from the basic plan, very few buildings that survived from earlier times as tangible links with the past, and that memories were not perpetuated in permanent structures within the city. My slight uneasiness is prompted precisely by these implications of Wright's phrase "an architecture of planned ephemerality" (and by Mote's somewhat similar but less explicit lines of reasoning). We do not yet know how the Chinese architectural system was originally formed. Yet in the minds of the Chinese, trabeate timber structures for the living had long become a norm - the only choice that the Chinese were given by their deep-rooted, seemingly unchallengeable tradition. This fact is revealed by the passages in many ancient texts, such as the Great Appendix ("Xici Zhuan") of the *Yi Jing*, *Mo Zi*, *Huainan Zi*, etc., all talking in a similarly didactic manner about the ancient Sage Kings' having initiated the construction of timber buildings for their subjects. For us, the knowledge and techniques of masonry construction possessed by the Chinese, along with those of timber construction, retrospectively present a range of options to the builders; but for the Chinese who were supposed to conform to ancient tradition, such options did not really exist. Their capability of building in stone does not mean that they *could* under ordinary conditions apply such techniques to structures for the living. Mote, (1973:63, note 18) in supporting his similar point, cites a temple (but actually the main hall in that temple) in Suzhou, which employed masonry to enclose large spaces under barrel vaults and thus acquired its popular name "beamless hall" (*wuliang dian* 無梁殿). But does not this name itself tell us that the hall was to the locals abnormal, as the name might well equate with "a hall that should have beams but does not?" Thus what the construction of Chang'an

built as an *urbs ephemera* must be asked, not in terms of materials and techniques, but in terms of values and ideas. He answers this question by stressing, among other things,[376] that immortality was sought in "the written word," specifically in the ultimate history of a dynasty that would be compiled by its successor dynasty from carefully kept archives of court and government. (Op. cit. 679)

This view is echoed, though in somewhat different terms and with different intent, by Mote (1973:49-53) in his discussion of the city of Suzhou. Unlike Wright, whose argument may be seen as emphasising "the Chinese sense of the future" in city construction, Mote (op.cit. 50-1) pays more attention to "the Chinese sense of the past." China was obsessed with its past to such extent that, in Mote's words, "it studied its past, and drew upon it, using it to design and to maintain its present as has no other civilisation." Yet for the Chinese, "the past was a past of words, not of stones." Since "Chinese civilisation did not lodge its history in buildings," Mote (op. cit. 51) writes,

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represents may not be so much "an architecture of planned ephemerality" as "an architecture of *determined* ephemerality." Such ephemerality is not, however, determined by materials and techniques, but by values and ideas - this corresponds with Wright's argument cited in the lines that follow.

376 Wright (1965:678) first brings to our attention different psychological impacts of the Chinese and the Roman histories on their distinctive approaches to city building:

> The Chinese - unlike the Romans - were not the heirs of a tradition that regarded city-states as the basic political units. It would have been impossible for them to regard their empire as a super-city dominating the earth. The phrase ". . . urbis et orbis idem" is meaningless to the Chinese. The idea of personifying the city as a deity as was done with the Goddess Roma was inconceivable. Therefore, whatever the hopes of a dynast for the perpetuation of his house and his empire, the building of an enduring capital would have been symbolically irrelevant. We have mentioned the omnipresent sense of history among the Chinese, and this bears on our question. The men who built Changan [sic] knew of many dynasties and many capitals in the Chinese past. . . . By this time in Chinese history, the life cycle of dynasties - their youth, their maturity, their senescence and death - appeared to be an established and inevitable sequence. A Chinese emperor might on his birthday accept the most extravagant wishes for his longevity and that of his house, but he did not believe that his line would hold sway forever. The Roman emperors, by contrast, were ruling an empire that had no precedent in the history they knew, and they were capable of the act of faith expressed in the words *Roma Aeterna*.

He then mentions two other ways in which hopes of personal glory in ages to come found expression in the building projects of the Chinese emperors. One is the building of majestic tombs outside the city walls, the other was the placing of the stone tablets of deceased emperors in the imperial ancestral hall there to be honoured by the imperial clan in solemn ceremonies. (Op. cit. 679) Yet if an emperor did not believe that his line would hold sway forever, he would surely have been aware that, at the end of his line, the stone tablets were hardly likely to be still preserved by the succeeding dynasties.

> The real past of Soochow [i.e. Suzhou] is a past of mind; its imperishable elements are moments of human experience. The only truly enduring embodiment of the eternal human moments are the literary ones.

He illustrates this point by citing and analysing an entry in the 1883 gazetteer (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 33: "Jinliang," no. 1) under the heading for the famous Maple Bridge which dates back to the Tang period.[377] This "psycho-historical material"[378] attaches little importance to the bridge as an object, because

> Its reality to them [the Chinese] was not the stones forming its span so much as the imperishable associations with it; those eternal moments realised in words. The physical object is entirely secondary. Anyone planning to achieve immortality in the minds of his fellow men might well give a lower priority to building some great stone monument than to cultivating his human capacities so that he might express himself imperishably in words, or at least be alluded to in some enduring line by a poet or essayist of immortal achievement. (Mote 1973:52-3)

Apart from the city walls, all other artifacts of the city are, or at least could be,[379] accounted for in the same way. In this sense, the city of Suzhou may indeed be thought of as "an ideational tumulus." Mote concludes:

> The literary remains . . . are to Soochow as is the Forum to Rome. From them every educated Chinese could reconstruct a real Soochow in his mind, without the cracks and the scars that mar old stones. He might even have preferred a substantial and usable rebuilt bridge or pagoda to an antique wreck. We must assume that

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377 The bridge became important in history because the eighth century poet Zhang Ji 張繼 wrote a poem, *Fengqiao Yebo* 楓橋夜泊 (Mooring at night at Maple Bridge), concerning it.

378 The entry, like so many others with the notable exception of the one under the heading for the city walls, is principally of psychological and historical value rather than objective and descriptive nature. It includes the location of the bridge, a discussion of the evolution of its name, the time of the construction of the present bridge, the time of its rebuilding and the name of the builders, and a small anthology of poems, starting with Zhang Ji's. We are not told of its building material, its measurements or its appearance, nor are we informed of its physical existence from Tang times up to 1770. It is the discussion of its name and the inclusion of the poems associated with it that are significant. The importance of names for the Chinese in general has been touched upon earlier in Chapters Two and Four. As for the poems, in Mote's (1973:52) words, they "all capture moments of experience or of reflection involving the bridge, but even more, involving the earlier poems inspired in some indirect way by the bridge."

379 The length of an entry in a gazetteer depends on the importance of the structure to which it refers. For the least important one, often only its location is mentioned; then, an account of when and by whom it was built and rebuilt, legends or historical events associated with it, and an anthology of poems and prose essays - each could be added to it as the structure's historical or social weight increased.

> even the ordinary man in the street also lived with an awareness of much of that ideally real city, as well as with the physical remnants of the city's long history. (Op. cit. 53)

It was therefore the accumulated verbal artifacts associated with the city of Suzhou, not the physical structures themselves, that united its "times past, times present, and times to come."

The ephemerality of building materials, the homogeneity of building forms and the lack of formal bond between building types and social institutions did not lead to any physically enduring monuments;[380] nor were they likely to produce any unique individual building which was distinguishable from others in form. The Chinese did not talk about this characteristic - they did not regard physical monumentality and uniqueness as desiderata; they may not even ever have thought of them. In the light of the works by both Wright and Mote, let me cite one particular example to illustrate this point. It comes from Shen Fu's 沈復 (1763-1808 or after) interesting, though somewhat cynical, remarks on Tengwang Ge 滕王閣, a multi-storey hall initially built in 659 by the River Gan 贛 at present-day Nanchang 南昌, and on Wang Bo's 王勃 (650-726) *Tengwang Ge Shixu* 滕王閣詩序,[381] a rhymed prose composition improvised in 671 at the official banquet in that hall, to which Wang, passing-by, was invited. Tengwang Ge became famous because of Wang's graceful and euphuistic prose eulogising the splendour of the hall's surrounding scenery, depicting the grand occasion of the banquet, and voicing the writer's yearning for the realisation of his talents.

After visiting the hall en route to Fujian in the late eighteenth century, Shen Fu writes otherwise:

> [We] arrived at Tengwang Ge. [The hall] was just like the *zunjing ge* 尊經閣[382] of our prefectural school moved to the Grand Quay outside Xu Gate. Thus what Wang Zi'an [i.e. Wang Bo] writes in his prose is not to be believed. (*Fusheng Liuji*, vol. 4: "Langyou Jikuai")

Shen Fu's rejection of Wang Bo's account undoubtedly does not concern the physical aspects of Tengwang Ge, for they are not mentioned in the prose by the Tang writer,

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380 Here emphasis is put on the term "monument" in its original sense of "memorial" or monumentum, not in its derivative sense of "a notable building or site."

381 The full title of the prose piece is *Qiuri Deng Hongfu Tengwang Ge Jianbie Xu* 秋日登洪府滕王閣餞別序.

382 A two-storey hall for keeping classical documents.

except for two short phrases of vivid metaphorical description of it. Quite apart from that, having been destroyed and rebuilt time and again during the intervening period of twelve centuries, the hall that Shen saw was certainly no longer physically the one referred to by Wang. It may be possible that the setting of the hall did not come up to Shen's expectations which had been fuelled by Wang's description of over a millennium earlier. It may also be possible that Shen was at that time in such a despondent mood that the enthusiastic spirit pervading Wang's piece of prose, inspired by the hall and its natural setting, and by the event associated with it, could not strike a sympathetic chord in his heart. Yet what is clearly disclosed in Shen Fu's comment is that this Qing intellectual did not consider Tengwang Ge as either a unique or a monumental physical object - what was unique and monumental in it was its reputation gained by its association with the specific persons and events which were all captured in words, and, to a lesser degree, by its unique name and the beauty of its natural setting; nor did he regard the *zunjing ge* of the prefectural school as a unique urban structure in terms of its physical form - its urban quality was brought about by its being incorporated in the school and likewise by its very appellation. Tengwang Ge was in Shen's eyes not at all different from the *zunjing ge*, as the latter could also well have been located outside the city walls.

The memory of specific associated persons and events were kept alive in literature, which was the real vehicle for commemoration, whereas the physical structures could be rebuilt repeatedly without any danger of losing their historical value and meanings; in short, monumental achievement was made in words. This was categorically stated by Zhu Changwen in 1084 when he found it difficult to determine the origins of many names of the residential wards (*fang* 坊) and the locations of some recorded alleys:

> From these we know that anything which is not written down in words can hardly last long. Thus the art of local record-writing should not be discarded.[383] (*Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. A: "Fangshi")

The vitality of the city, with all the ideas and memories associated with it, was maintained in the written word; the past reality of the city was psychologically present in the minds of its residents.

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383 It is interesting to note that Zhu Changwen wrote his work at the time when the collapse of the residential ward system was in final progress, but the passage shows that he did not pay any attention to the physical form of the wards or the physical form of their gates, nor did he express any uneasiness at their changes.

Here, we may see in the city two somewhat parallel social forces at work keeping the memories going and making history. One was represented by the scholar-officials or the intelligentsia (in the broadest sense of the word) at large, who incessantly recorded not only the names, dates of construction, and locations of numerous structures, but events and moments of experiences or of reflections involving them. Their reality to the Chinese thus became ideas embodied in the most durable forms - in poetry, prose and all other forms of literature. The intelligentsia seldom paid attention to the physical and technical aspects of these structures, which, to borrow Wright's (1977:34) words, were to the elite "less attractive than those connected with morality, statecraft, history and the arts - subjects of high prestige on which one could write with hope of renown and possibly immortality." It was the artisans and craftsmen who represented the other social force that kept alive a profoundly conservative architectural tradition. Through working manuals and mneumonic craft-rhymes, and through apprenticeship, traditional forms and techniques of building were sustained, though undergoing gradual transformation, from one generation to the next. The spiritual reality was perpetuated by the intelligentsia, whereas the physical reality was preserved by the craftsmen. By nourishing and complementing each other, these two realities in their development jointly rendered the city of Suzhou "time free" as a purely physical object.

6.2 TEMPLE COURTYARD

I have argued that, although formal and, perhaps to a less degree, typological differentiation in Chinese architecture was naturally associated with the pattern of everyday activities, it did not reflect the organisational and functional distinctions between social institutions. An individual building, seldom standing alone, was differentiated from others within a building compound which was a physical embodiment of a certain institution, and which, in form and style, was similar to other compounds. It was largely the compounds enclosed by walls, not the individual buildings, that gave rise to the characteristic formation of traditional Chinese habitations. One of the obvious consequences of the ubiquity of building compounds was that in the city each of them became a basic component of the urban texture. Spatial arrangement within it technically presupposed the development of the courtyard, under the dominance of which individual buildings were physically and

conceptually joined together into a whole. Arranging buildings so as to form one, two or a series of courtyards was more than an ideal measure; it was in fact a norm for the layout of houses and all other social establishments.[384] In Figure 6-3, I adapt from the 1229 picture map of the city of Suzhou four examples of courtyard compounds, including the prefectural school-temple, the prefectural examination offices, the Gusu 姑蘇 Guest House and the Buddhist temple Nengren Si 能仁寺. Figures 6-4 - 6-9 are the plans of a few houses of various sizes within the city, all built in the late imperial period. Without addressing myself to the discussion of its form, social and symbolic meanings, and the pattern of daily use, I should only emphasise, as our preoccupation with the subject of urban space determines, that, apart from the streets and alleys, the courtyard was the only kind of open space - both intentionally and conventionally contrived - in the city. Courtyards provided the city residents with abundant pleasant air, sunlight and vegetation, to be sure; but most of them were in principle private spaces shared only by the members of each family in the case of a house, or by the members of each specific social organisation in the case of other compounds. It was the courtyards of Buddhist, Daoist and popular temples that retained a public nature.

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384 This does not claim that building compounds and their courtyards formed an even spatial texture in the real city, which would be not only a simplistic but a very wrong kind of perception, especially where the late imperial period is concerned. The size of the courtyard varied significantly, the range of this variation being dictated by the social importance of the compound and, more decisively, by the economic status of the institution. This was most obvious for houses. In the city of Suzhou, the wealthy and the high ranking officials' houses could comprise a series of courtyards, the largest measuring well over ten metres across, and, in many cases, spacious gardens (see Figures 6-6 - 6-9); the houses of the economically and socially less advantaged residents might contain only one or two courtyards as small as four square metres (see Figures 6-4 and 6-5); and many of the urban poor, numbering, if Skinner's (1977e:537) estimate is applicable to Suzhou, between a tenth and a fifth of the entire urban population, did not actually have a courtyard of their own at all. There were also the kind of shop-residences along the streets of business areas, each occupying a deep plot with a narrow frontage, filled by two-storey buildings arranged in-between tiny courtyards, or "sky-wells" (*tianjing* 天井). The front, outward-opening rooms were employed as shops, the rear parts as storage; the upper floor was reserved as the living space for the occupants and apprentices. These structures were probably developed from the Southern Song onward, when trade and commerce started to be conducted freely within the city or its outlying suburbs after the collapse of the ward system. Thereafter, they became a common feature in both cities and market towns in South China. Moreover, although a sharp separation between the neighbourhoods of the well-off and city slums was not a typical city phenomenon in traditional China, the residences of the rich and the poor were not evenly intermingled either - some of the houses, or more accurately, hovels and shacks, of the latter may have squeezed themselves in the remnant spaces of the populated neighbourhoods, but the majority of them were more likely to be found in the peripheral areas of the three professional nuclei and the isolated corners of the walled city.

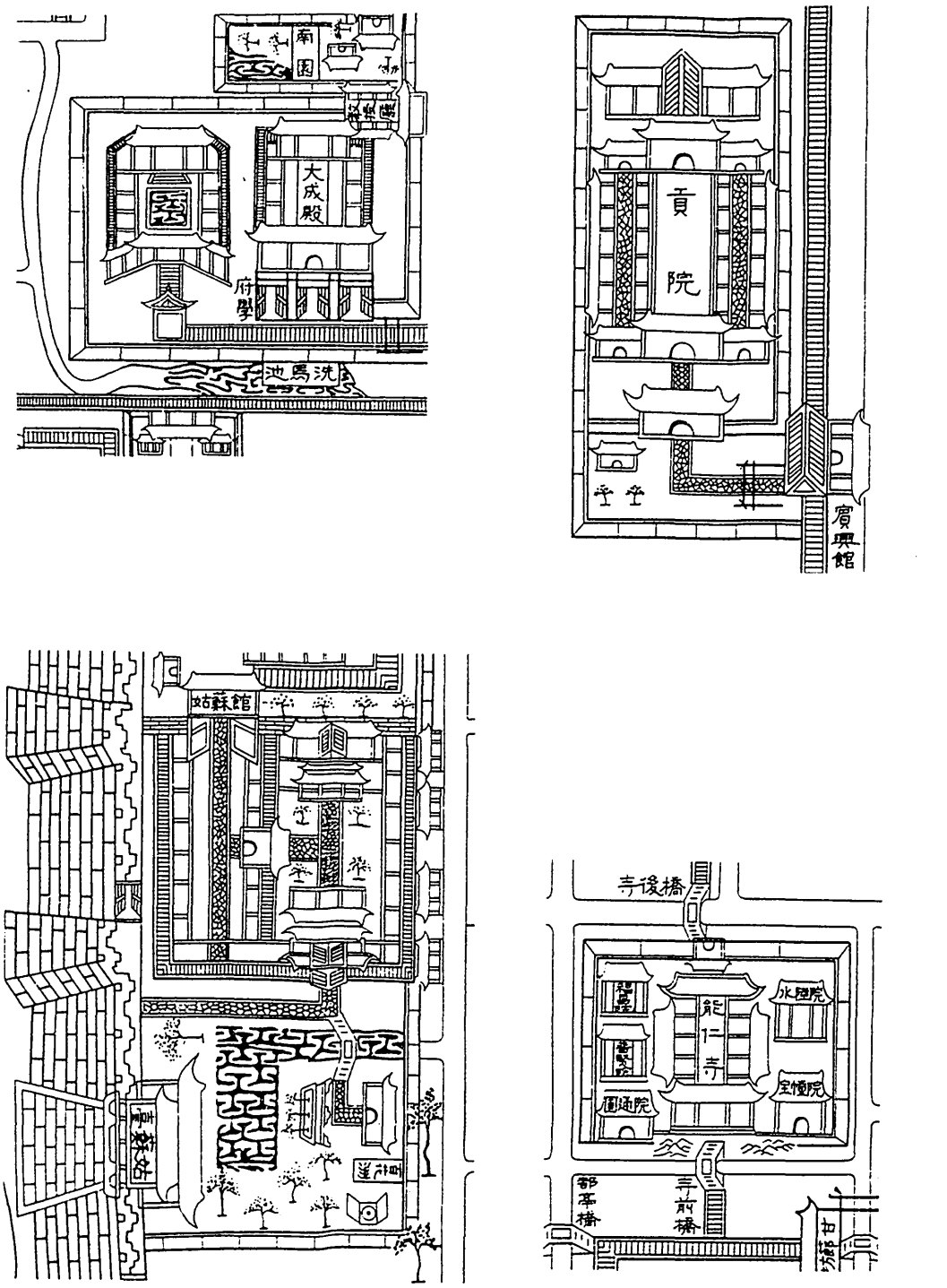

Figure 6-3 Examples of the courtyard compounds portrayed on the 1229 city map *Pingjiang Tu*, including the prefectural school-temple (top left), the prefectural examination offices (top right), the Gusu Guest House (bottom left) and the Buddhist temple Nengren Si (bottom right).

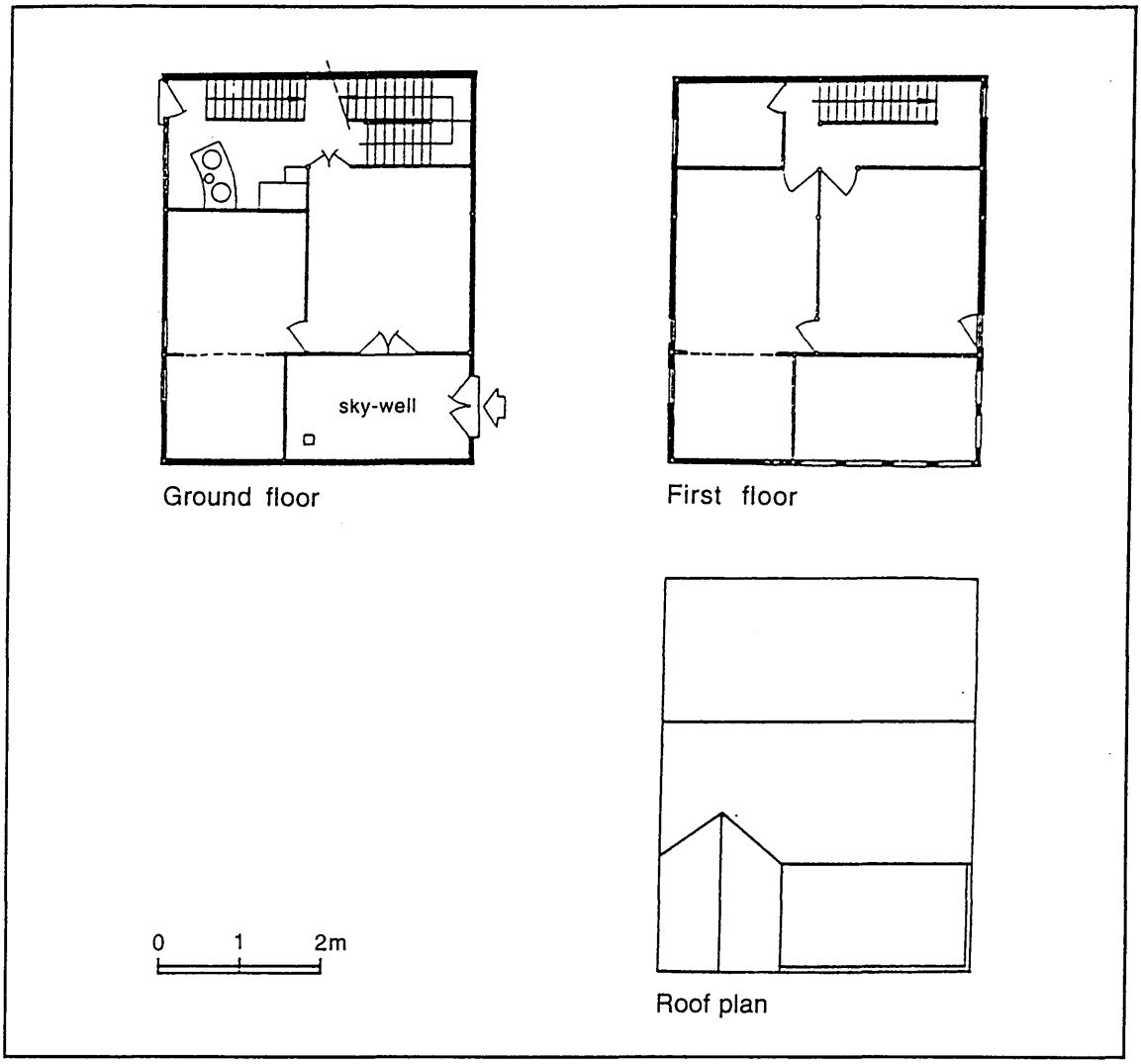

Figure 6-4 Plan of the house of the Lu 陸 family in Tangjia 湯家 Ally. (TDJGXJYS 1958:83)

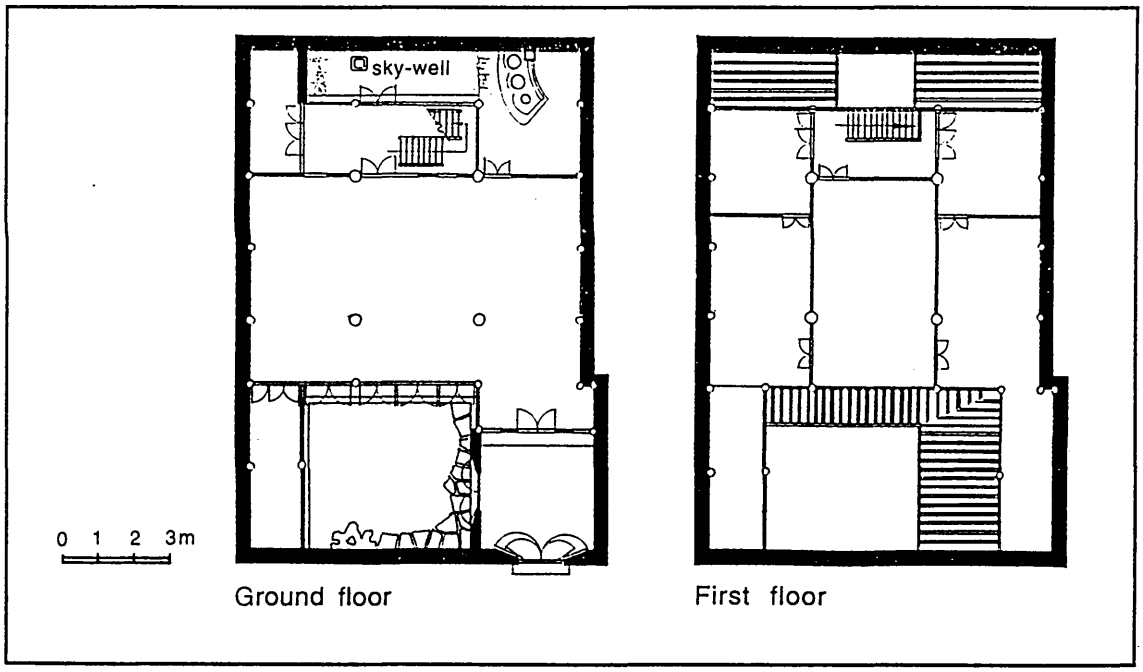

Figure 6-5 Plan of the house of the Zhang 張 family in Ma Dalu 馬大籙 Ally. (TDJGXJYS 1958:84)

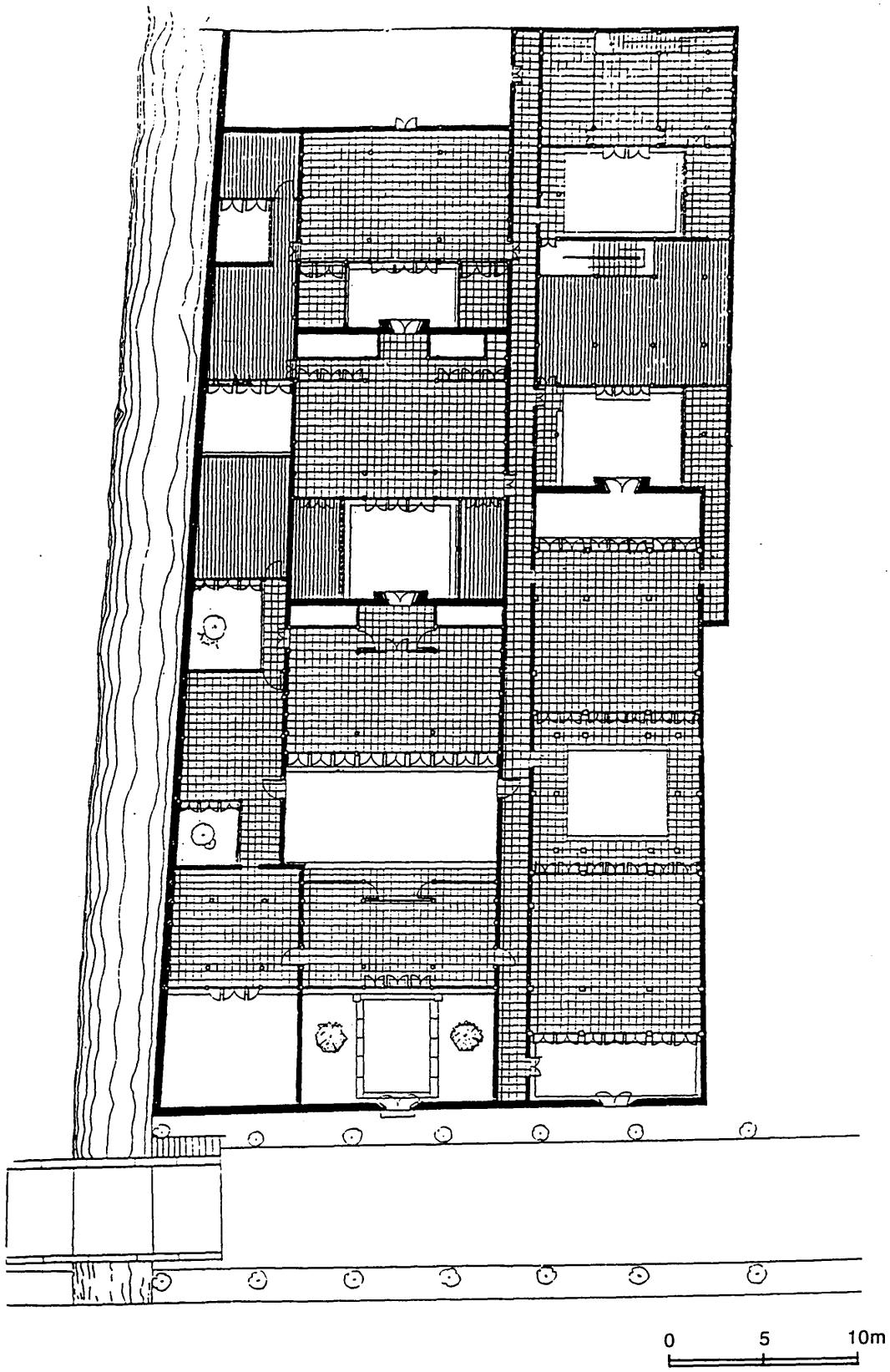

Figure 6-6 Plan of the house of the Chen 陳 family in Dongbei 東北 Street. (TDJGXJYS 1958:93)

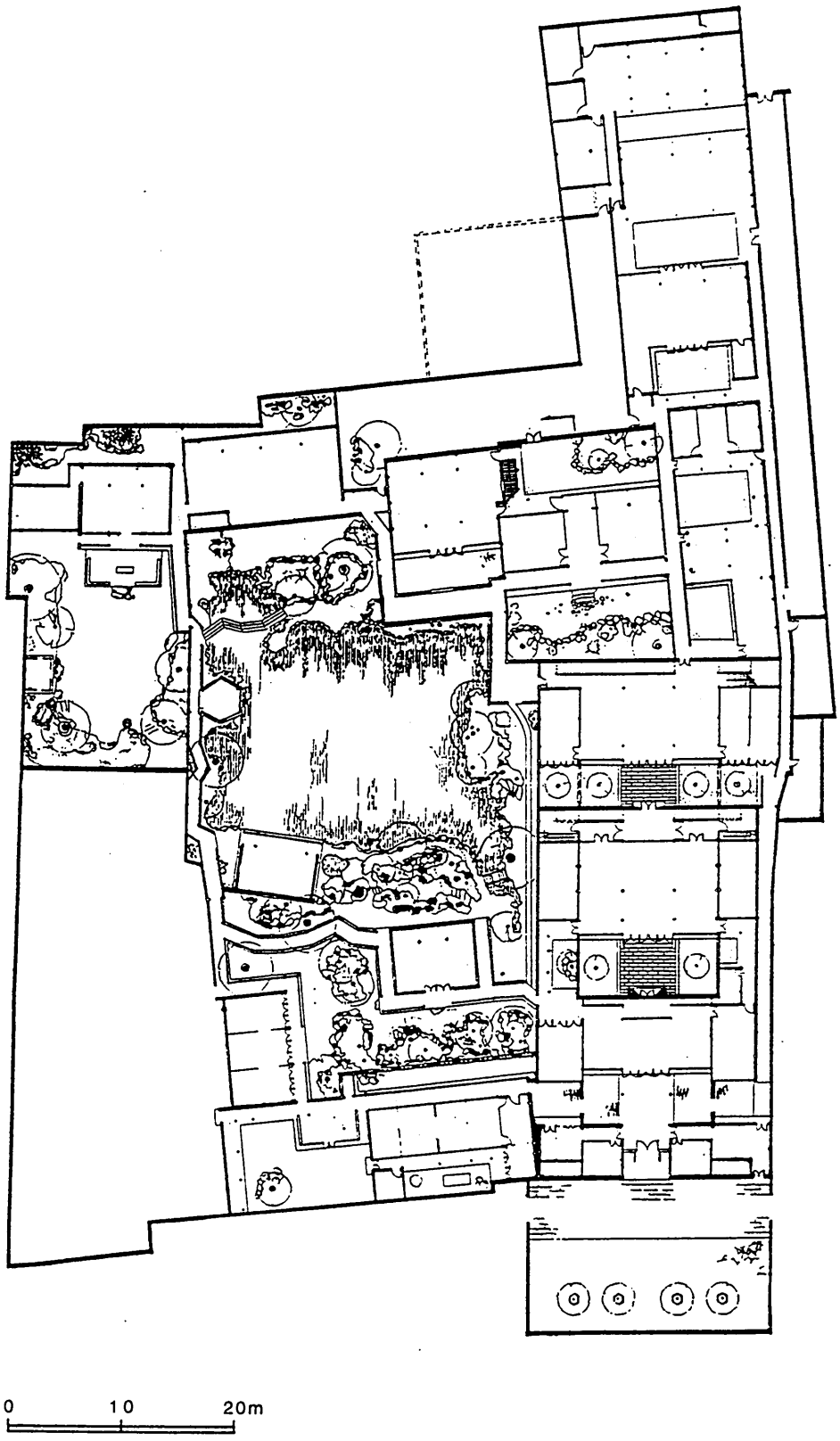

Figure 6-7 Plan of the garden-house Wangshi Yuan 網師園 in Kuojietou 闊階頭 Alley. (TDJGXJYS 1958:91)

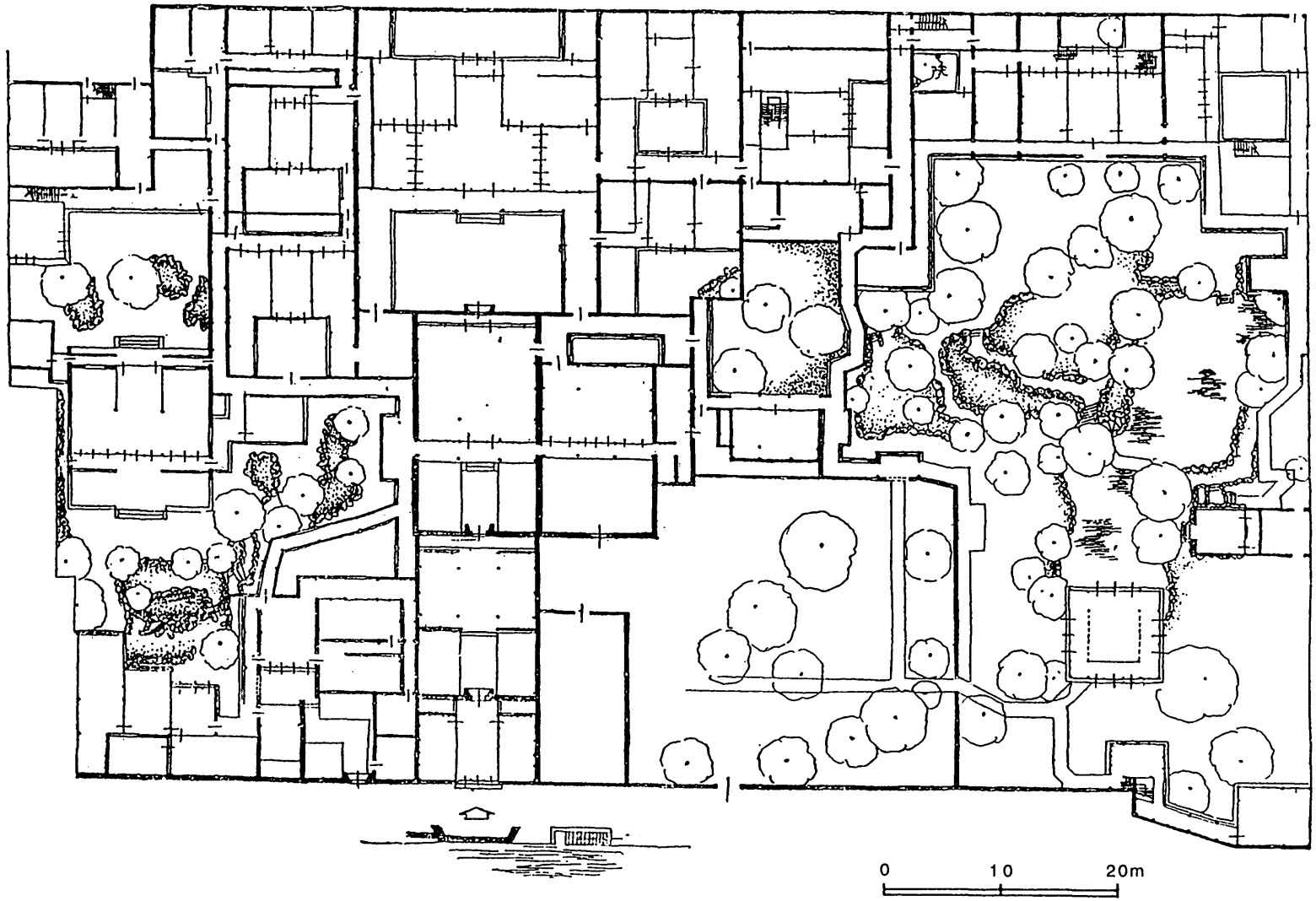

Figure 6-8 Plan of the garden-house of the Liu 劉 family, also known as the Companion Garden (Ou Yuan 耦園), in Xiaoxinqiao 小新橋 Alley. (TDJGXJYS 1958:112)

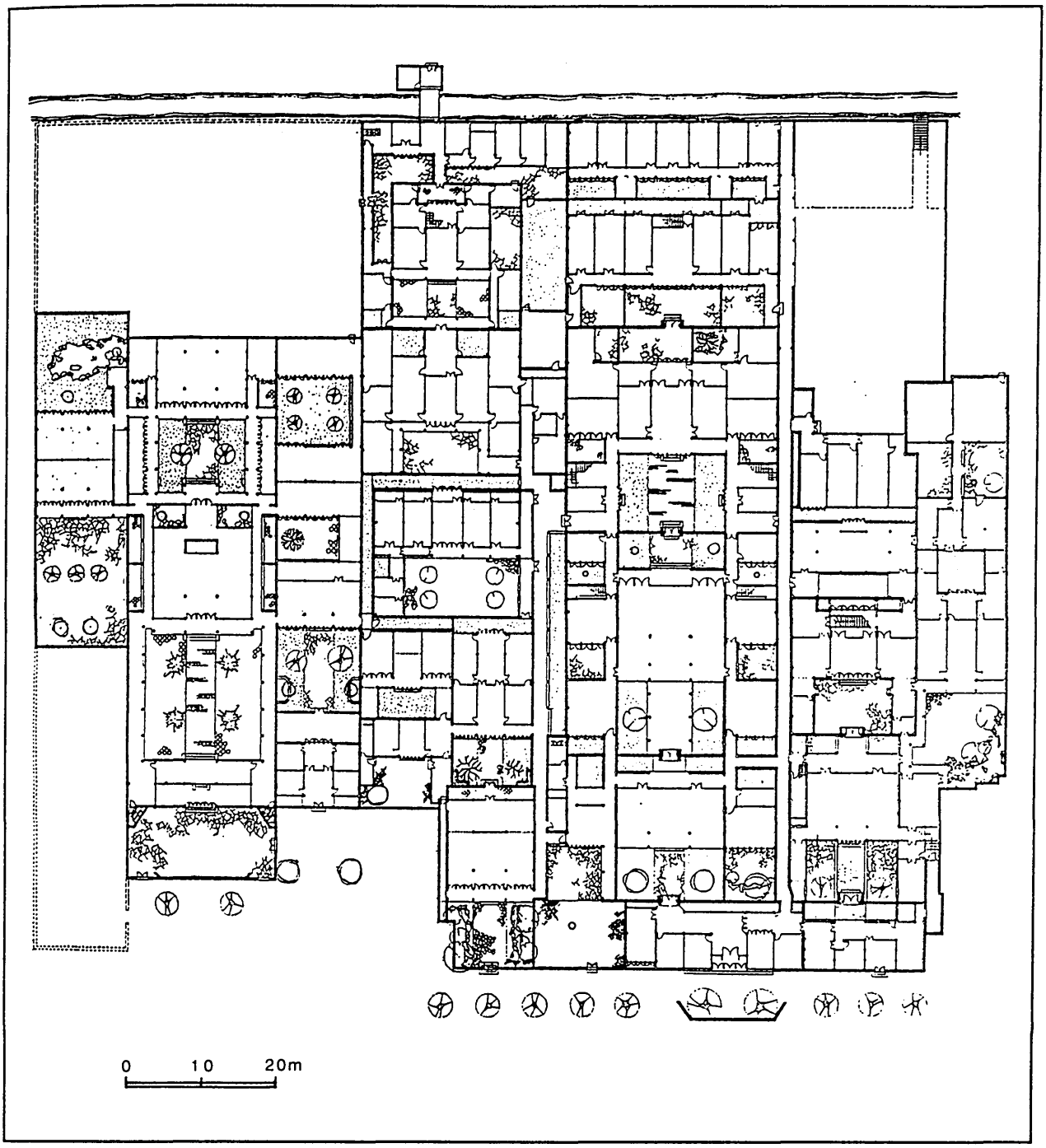

Figure 6-9 Plan of the house of the Lu 陸 family in Tianguan Fang 天官坊. (TDJGXJYS 1958:162) According to Chen Congzhou, (1981:10) this house is the largest in terms of land area covered.

6.2.1 Temples in Suzhou

Temples[385] in a traditional Chinese city are usually classified into four categories: official, Buddhist, Daoist and popular, (see, e.g., Feuchtwang 1977:582) although one often finds that elements of other distinct cults were to some degree incorporated in a temple of a certain category. Some of the official temples, as for example the Altar to the Gods of Earth and Grain, had their root in antiquity, while many others were of later development, the most notable ones being the Wenmiao 文廟 (lit. "Temple of Civil Culture") or Kongmiao 孔廟 (lit. "Confucian Temple") which was almost invariably located in every prefectural and county school, and thus acquired its English name "school-temple;" the temple of Guandi 關帝 (lit. "Emperor Guan"), this name in some cases being a popular one for the Wumiao 武廟 (lit. "Temple of Warfare"); and the temple of Chenghuang 城隍 (lit. "City Walls and Moats," but often very loosely, if not erroneously, translated by many Western scholars as "City God")[386].

As Buddhist texts poured into China in an unceasing stream from the middle of the second century onwards, reaching a maximal influx perhaps in the fifth century, (Needham 1956:406) Buddhist temple construction became a conspicuous phenomenon in Suzhou between the early third century and the late sixth century[387] when the area still remained culturally marginal as compared with elsewhere in Central China; and this process became particularly intensified during the Southern Liang 梁 period (A.D. 503-557) largely because of the fervent inclinations of Emperor Wu of Liang (Liang Wudi 梁武帝, A.D. 464-549) towards Buddhism. (See, e.g., *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, vol. B: "Siyuan") It was roughly during the same period that a large number of Daoist temples started to be built in this area as well.[388] This activity continued through the Tang and Song and on up to the end of Qing, even though there were intermittent disruptions brought about by wars

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385 This section does not aim at a comprehensive investigation of the temples in Suzhou, but only deals with the manner of the use of urban open space for multiple purposes and its social implications by focusing on a specific case - the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan 玄妙觀.

386 For a detailed discussion of the cults of Chenghuang during the Tang and Song periods, see Johnson 1985b.

387 This period is called by Chinese historians the Six Dynasties (Liu Chao 六朝).

388 Wen Liding, (1988:57) on the basis of the information contained in the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi* and 1933 *Wuxian Zhi*, states statistically, though inconclusively, that out of the approximately 450 Buddhist and Daoist temples ever built in the Suzhou area, 107 are recorded as having their history dating back to the Six Dynasties period, while 73 were probably built between A.D. 503 and 557.

and by spells of suppression of Buddhist or Daoist practice from the central authorities.

The origin of a few popular temples dedicated to local men of antiquity, celebrated virtue or eminent career may be traced back to pre-imperial times, these being such as the shrines of Taibo 太伯, Zhongyong 仲雍 and Wu Zixu 伍子胥, although Gu Zhentao in his *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 10) claims that the Temple of the God of Wealth in the East of the River [Yangzi] (Jiangdong Caishenmiao 江東財神廟) built in A.D. 239 was the earliest of this kind. It was in the imperial era, especially in its second half, that miscellaneous popular temples proliferated. Some of them accommodated cults which were later shared by or adopted into the religion of the state.

Yoshinobu Shiba, in his study of the city of Ningbo 寧波, (1977:422) emphasises the inextricable link between various cults and social groups in traditional China. He writes:

> In traditional Chinese society, group interests were almost always given religious expression. Thus, the variety of temples in a city reflected the principles of organisation on which its social structure rested.

The situation in Ningbo as illustrated by Shiba, (422-5) must have been very similar to that in Suzhou. Resident bureaucrats and scholars were undoubtedly closely associated with the official temples of the state cult, especially the three Confucian school-temples, those of the *fuxue* 府學 (lit. "prefectural school"), the Wu *xianxue* 吳縣學 (lit. "Wu county school") and the Chang-Yuan *xianxue* 長元縣學 (lit. "Changzhou and Yuanhe [joint] county school"). They supported temples to famous local men of admirable deeds and patronised temples associated with bureaucratic and educational matters. (See, e.g., *Baicheng Yanshui*, vols. 1, 2 & 3:*passim*) Immigrant or subethnic groups established some specific temples to the deities in the local tradition of their native places; Tianhou Gong 天后宮 (lit. "palace of the Empress of Heaven"), the shrine of a special cult originated by the coastal people of Fujian 福建 province and frequently attended by fishermen and water-borne merchants,[389] was one of such examples, even though its importance in urban social life in Suzhou may not have been comparable to that of its counterpart in Ningbo, the latter being a port city. Occupational groups dedicated a

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389 For a discussion of the origins and later development of the cult dedicated to the goddess Tianhou, see Watson 1985:292-324.

large number of temples to the patron deities or demigods of their callings, many of them being located within the corresponding professional guild compounds.[390] Indeed, one of the two common features of the guild association, religious corporation,[391] typically exemplified the religious nature of social organisation in late imperial China. Thus van der Sprenkel's (1977:615) warning against making too sharp a distinction between temples and other types of organisation seems very necessary. The location of these temples tended to be in line with the characteristic partitioning of urban space which I have demonstrated earlier; that is, a temple was usually situated in the district in which the specific activities of its patron group were dominant.

However, the reflection of the modes of social organisation by the variety of temples in and around the city does not mean the exclusive functioning of all temples for the members of the groups which patronised them.[392] Apart from the temples patronised by and functioning strictly for a particular class (notably that of the scholar-officials), subethnic group or occupational calling, many others were essentially communal in nature, just as most Buddhist and Daoist temples in principle invited participation in their ritual and other activities by all sections of society. They either catered, especially in the case of the temples to the Gods of Earth (*tudi* 土地), to a specific territory defined in terms of the deity's

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390 A few temples of this kind in Suzhou are listed in the *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 9).

391 Golas' (1977) work on the early Qing guilds demonstrates that, of the two universal features amongst the earliest guilds - religious corporation and native-place particularism, the former was more resistant to change, whereas the latter gradually evolved along economic or professional lines rather than in accordance with strong regional interests.

392 It is a paradoxical phenomenon that numerous temple cults co-existed in a vast country which revealed a recognisable cultural unity. James L. Watson (1985:293) has acutely observed this problem, before showing, in the specific case of the promotion of Tianhou, how the state intervened in subtle ways to impose a kind of unity on regional and local-level cults:

> At first sight, it is easy to gain the impression that Chinese temple cults are a manifestation of cultural anarchy rather than integration. Literally thousands of deities were worshipped in temples of every conceivable description throughout the empire. In most parts of China religious activities were not organised by a professional clergy. Local people built their own temples, installed their own deities, and ran their own festivals. On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that the state intervened in subtle ways to impose a kind of unity on regional and local-level cults. The mass of peasants were seldom even aware of the state's intervention. A surprisingly high degree of uniformity was attained through the promotion of deities that had been sanctioned by the Imperial Board of Rites and recognised by the emperor himself.

jurisdiction;[393] or to their vicinity, with the distance of their influence largely depending on their reputation and scale. Large temples of this kind, in contrast to those of social exclusion, were distributed fairly evenly throughout the city and its near suburban areas.

6.2.2 The Daoist Temple Xuanmiao Guan

It was such temples of communal nature that functioned as the loci of urban activities. Among those in the city of Suzhou, the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan located slightly north of the geometric centre of the city (see Figure 6-10), which was built either in the first half of the eighth century or more probably earlier,[394] seems to have been the most important one. If Shiba's statement is true that the temples to Chenghuang in many cities provided a ritual link between the popular religion of the city people and the official state cult,[395] (Shiba 1977:424) it was Xuanmiao Guan that afforded all sections of the people of Suzhou a notable venue where various religious, social and economic activities were conducted, and thus functioned as a practical link between the local residents of different class, profession and place of residence. Figures 6-11 and 6-12 are picture maps of the Xuanmiao Guan found respectively on the 1229 city map and in the *Xuanmiao Guan*

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393 The territorial definition of these temples by no means meant a social exclusion of those who were not residents of the area or neighbourhood in question. Skinner (1977e:548) points out that, whereas the associations hinged upon *tudi* deities were inward looking, with the annual feast limited to association members, the sectors or wards of the city centred on deity temples were outward looking, their festivals designed to attract visitors from other wards and to provide occasions for hosting kinsmen, fellows from the same native place, business associates, and friends residing elsewhere.

394 According to the *Wudi Ji* ("Houji") and the *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. B: "Gongguan"), the temple was built between A.D. 713 and 741 in the Tang, then being known as Kaiyuan Guan 開元觀 or Kaiyuan Gong 開元宮. Fan Chengda of the Southern Song, indicating only that this temple was the continuation of the Tang dynasty Kaiyuan Guan, asserts that some of the things in the temple in his time that had survived the wars could be dated back to the Six Dynasties period between the early third century and the late sixth century, implying that the date of the initial establishment of the temple was well anterior to the Tang period. Most of the later documents, especially those in the Ming and Qing, explicitly state that the temple was constructed for the first time in A.D. 276 in the Western Jin 晉, when it was called Zhenqing Daoyuan 真慶道院. (See, e.g., *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian") The name of the temple changed, not unusually, many times in history, as dynasty succeeded dynasty, and reign succeeded reign. In chronological order they are: Zhenqing Daoyuan (from A.D. 276), Kaiyuan Guan (or Kaiyuan Gong) (from 728), Yuqing Daoguan 玉清道觀 (from the 990s), Tianqing Guan 天慶觀 (from 1009), Xuanmiao Guan (from 1295), Zhengyi Conglin 正一叢林 (from 1371), Yuanmiao Guan 圓妙觀 (or 元妙觀) (from the 1640s) and Xuanmiao Guan (from the end of the Qing on).

395 A similar view is presented by Feuchtwang (1977:*passim*) who sees the position of the City God cult as a point of transformation between the official and the popular religions.

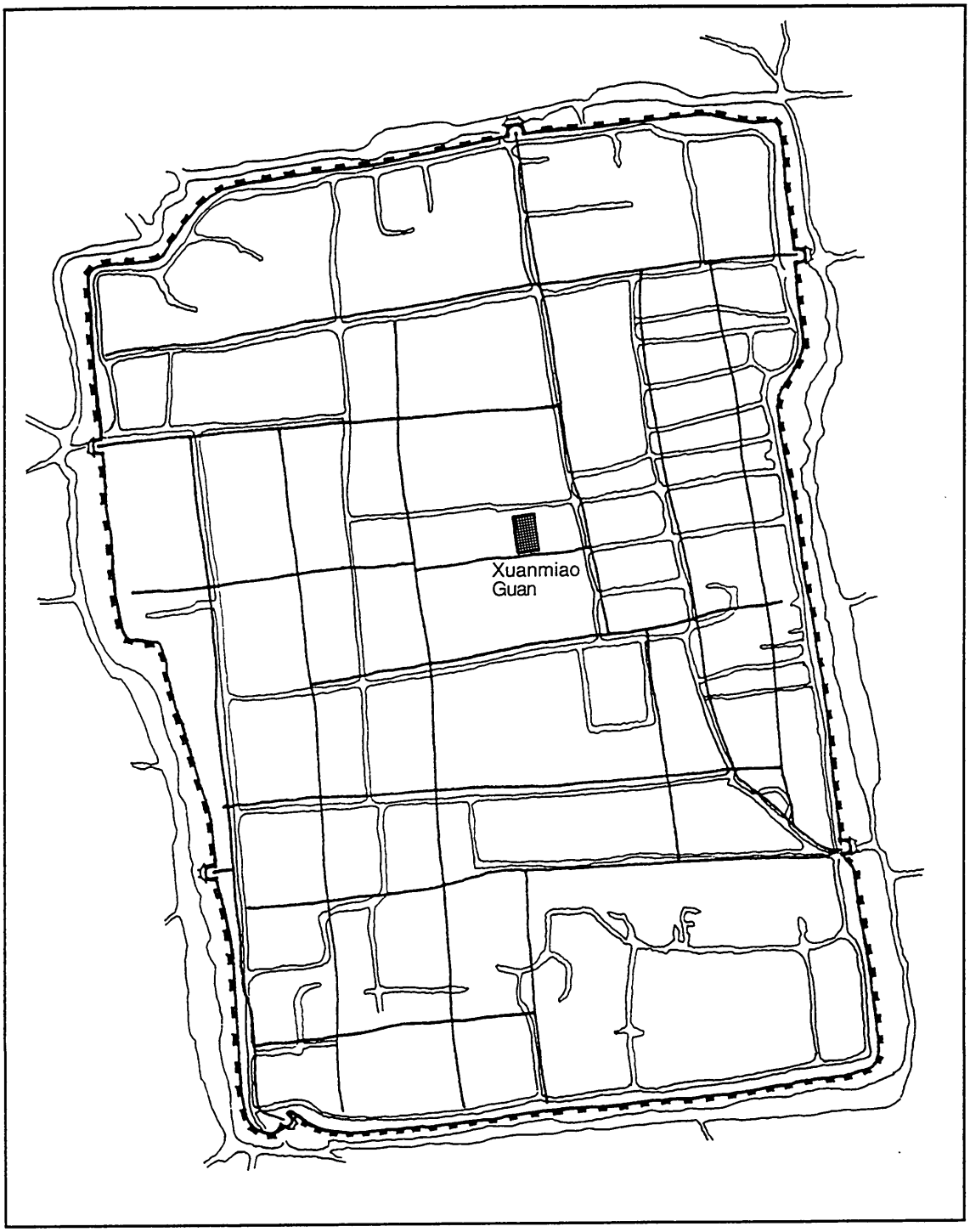

Figure 6-10 The geographical position of the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan.

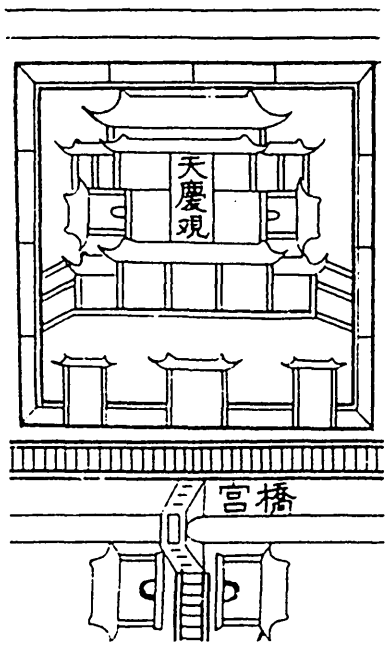

Figure 6-11 Xuanmiao Guan (known as Tianqing Guan during the Southern Song period) portrayed on the 1229 city map *Pingjiang Tu*.

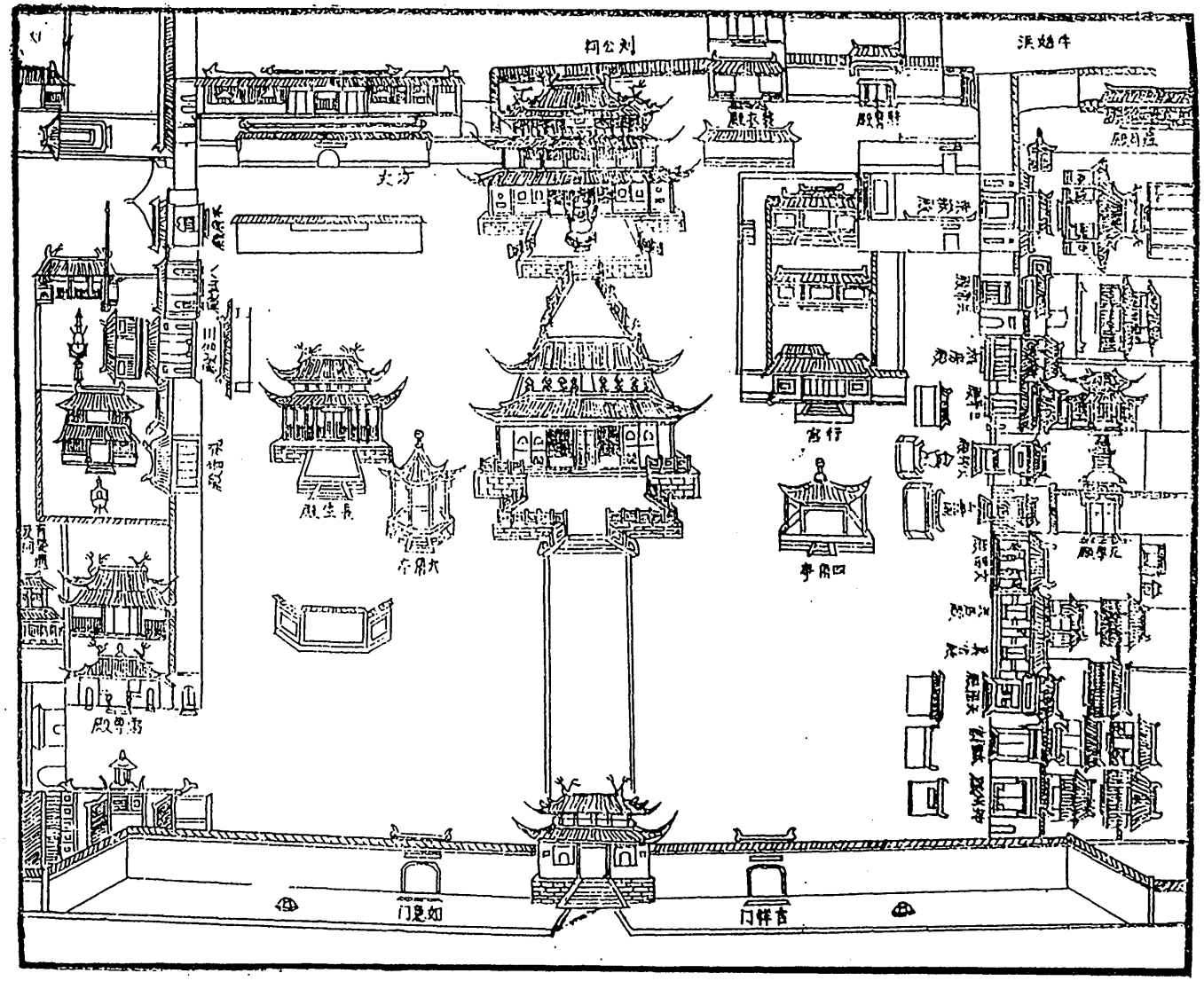

Figure 6-12 Picture map of Xuanmiao Guan contained in the *Xuanmiao Guan Zhi* compiled in the first half of the nineteenth century. (SDXB 1984:145-6)

Zhi 玄妙觀志 (Annals of Xuanmiao Guan) compiled in the first half of the nineteenth century. Figure 6-13 contains photographs of two main halls of the temple around the turn of the twentieth century.

Xuanmiao Guan was the largest and most prominent Daoist temple in Suzhou prefecture, or probably in the whole Lower Yangzi region. Its reputation was such that several emperors of successive dynasties from the Tang onward bestowed what is called an *e* 額 (a horizontal board with the name of the temple inscribed on it) in their own handwriting on the temple.[396] Naturally, it held a series of important Daoist rituals and festivals throughout the year, especially those associated with the deities' birthdays as stipulated in the contemporary Daoist doctrines, such as the birthday of the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang 玉皇) on the ninth day of the first month, the birthday of the God of the East Mount (Dongyuedi 東嶽帝) on the twenty-eighth day of the third month, and the birthday of the God of Thunder (Leizun 雷尊) on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.[397] These occasions attracted a large number of people from both the city and its surrounding towns and villages, who came to the temple to burn joss-sticks, worship the deity, and pray for their health, welfare and success, or to redeem a vow to the deity. (Ibid.) In fact, Xuanmiao Guan, like some other large Buddhist and Daoist temples in and around the city, was also a place where customary annual rituals were performed, which only loosely fell within the scope of Daoist religion. Gu Lu 顧祿, a native of Wu county, recorded in his *Qing Jia Lu* (vol. 1: "Xinnian") in the first half of the nineteenth century that, during the New Year period, every Buddhist or Daoist temple in the Suzhou area conducted the annual sacrificial ceremony (*suijiao* 歲醮), "Xuanmiao Guan being the particular one in which people rushed to gather."[398]

On these ceremonial occasions, however, social activities occurring in the temple courtyard were not confined to purely religious matters. On the contrary,

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396 See, e.g., *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 41: "Siguan," 3.

397 *Qing Jia Lu*, vols. 1, 3 & 6; *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 52A: "Fengsu," no. 1.

398 Less important temples involved in this specific annual event were the Buddhist North Temple (Bei Si 北寺, its formal contemporary name being Bao'en Si 報恩寺) at the north end of the city, and West Garden Temple (Xiyuan Si 西園寺, its formal contemporary name being Jiezhuanglü Si 戒幢律寺). The tradition of this annual ceremonial activity until the Qing period seems to have been that the event was held more often in Buddhist temples than Daoist temples. (Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 2: "Fengsu;" *Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 1: "Xinnian") Gu Lu has specifically indicated that by his time the number of people attending the New Year ceremony held in North Temple had declined, while an open area around Wende 文德 Bridge outside Chang Gate (half way to Feng Bridge) - an integral part of the bustling business district - was developed as an area where people gathered during the New Year period.

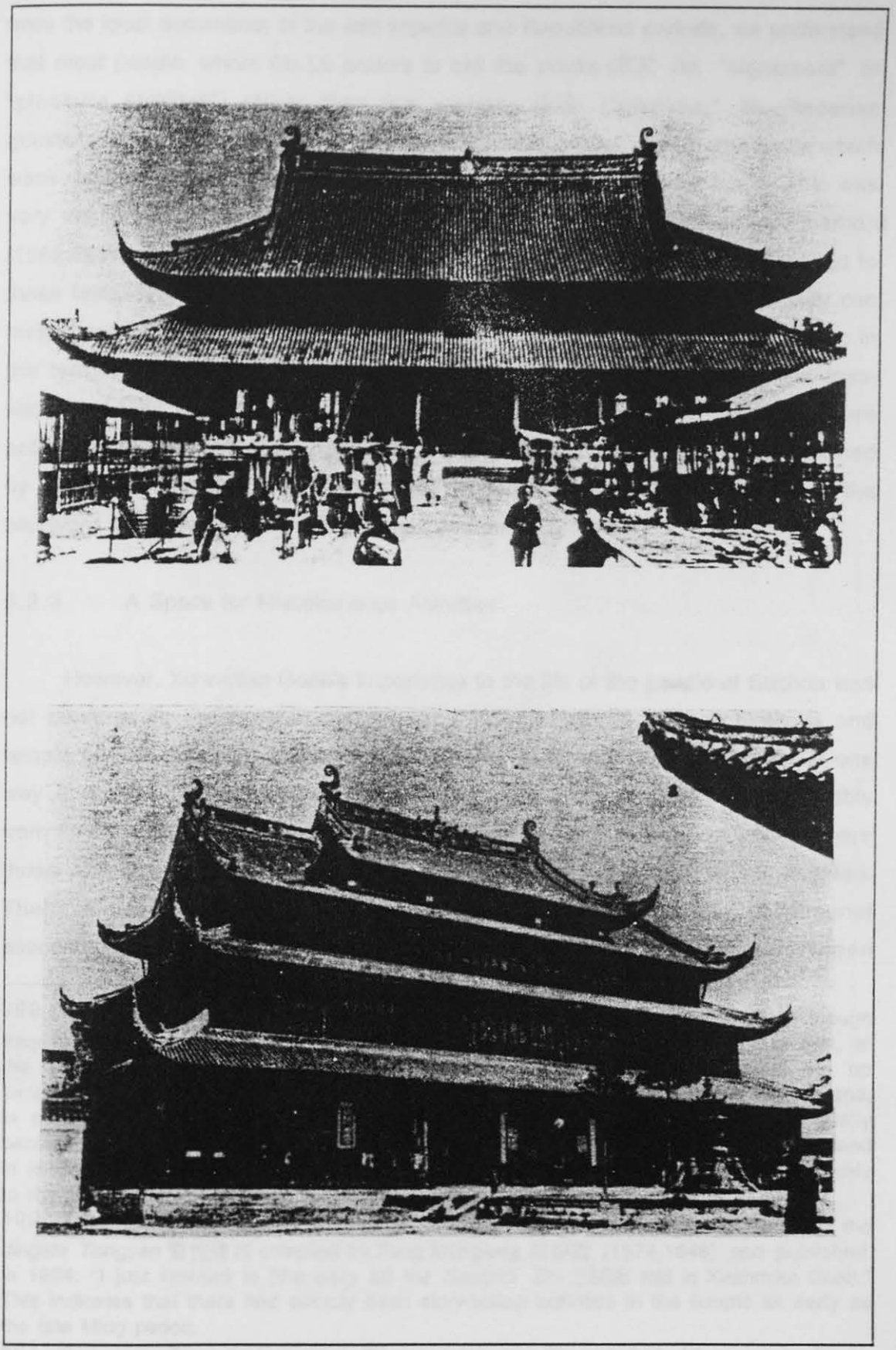

Figure 6-13 The two main halls of Xuanmiao Guan: Sanqing Dian (top) and Miluo Bao Ge 彌羅寶閣 (bottom), the latter destroyed by fire in 1912. (Yao 1986:118)

from the local documents of the late imperial and Republican periods, we understand that most people, whom Gu Lu prefers to call the *youke* 游客 (lit. "sightseers" or "pleasure strollers") rather than the *xiangke* 香客 ("pilgrims," lit. "incense guests"), were attracted to the temple by the theatre, noise, colour and bustle which were much more clamorous during these festivals than in normal times. This was very similar in nature to the temple fairs (*miaohui* 廟會) described by Eberhard (1962:243) who writes: "City people, even the members of the upper classes, go to these fairs, even if they are not at all interested in religion, because here they can make good buys - often 'discoveries'." On such occasions, more stalls were set up in the temple by peddlers to sell various small articles ranging from candles, joss-sticks and New Year pictures to a wide choice of food and drinks,[399] and there were activities such as story-telling,[400] fortune-telling and variety shows performed by people coming from other regions.[401] Figure 6-14 shows the allocation of the courtyard of the temple to various shops and stalls in 1949.

6.2.3 A Space for Miscellaneous Activities

However, Xuanmiao Guan's importance to the life of the people of Suzhou was not confined to these communal Daoist ritual ceremonies, annual festivals and temple market activities, which were functionally associated with each other in one way or another. Diverse social groups also found their interests here. Probably from as early as the Yuan period onward, Xuanmiao Guan became the locus where those who were engaged in spinning and weaving activities frequently congregated. Their earliest professional guild, Jiye Gongsuo 機業公所 (lit. "communal association of the textile profession"), was founded in Xuanmiao Guan, (*Wumen*

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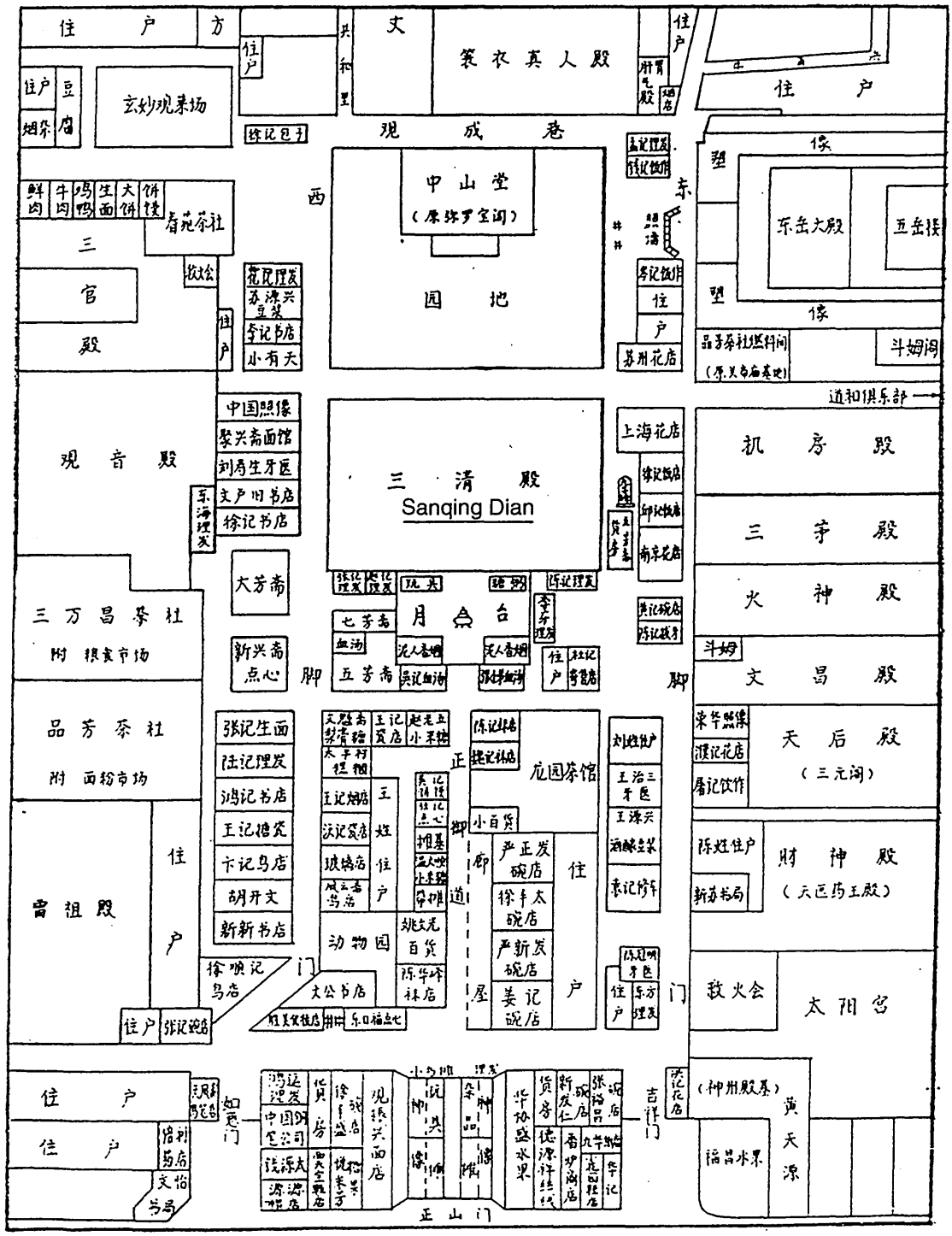
399 Markets in Xuanmiao Guan did not take place only during these festivals, although they initially occurred in the form of "temple fairs". SDXB (1984:171) suggests that, at the early stages of the Xuanmiao Guan market, only scattered stalls were set up temporarily in the temple courtyard on festival days; but as more and more pilgrims and, in particular, tourists came to visit the temple all year round, the market gradually became permanent, as the temple let either some of its buildings as shops or pieces of land in its courtyard to various retailers to build makeshift booths, the rent being paid monthly to the temple.

400 A scholar by the name of Wu'ai Jushi 無礙居士 writes in one of the prefaces to the *Jingshi Tongyan* 警世通言 compiled by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) and published in 1624: "I just listened to [the story of] the *Sanguo Zhi* 三國志 told in Xuanmiao Guan." This indicates that there had already been story-telling activities in the temple as early as the late Ming period.

401 See, e.g., *Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 1: "Xinnian;" *Wuxian Zhi*, vol. 52A: "Fengsu," A. Gu Lu depicts in detail the variety shows performed in the temple during the New Year period by those coming from distant Fengyang 鳳陽 (in present-day Anhui 安徽 province), Jiangyin 江陰 (in present-day North Jiangsu 江蘇 province) and Jiangxi 江西. (*Qing Jia Lu*, op.cit.)


三 清 殿
Sanqing Dian
中 山 堂
（原称罗宝词）
园 地
观 音 殿
三 官 殿
玄妙观茶场
观 成 巷
东 西
三 万 昌 茶 社
附 粮食市场
品 芳 茶 社
附 面粉市场
曾 祖 殿
大 方 斋
新 兴 斋 点 心
七 芳 斋
五 芳 斋
月 台
脚
脚
张记生面
汪记理发
鸿记书店
王记糖货
卞记鸟店
胡开文
新新书店
徐顺记鸟店
张记鞋店
王记烟店
沃记货店
玻璃店
动 物 园
大公书店
东口福点心
正 门
龙园茶馆
小百货
严正发碗店
徐丰太碗店
严新发碗店
姜记碗店
刘姓住户
王治三牙医
王源兴酒酱菜
来记修车
陈姓住户
新苏书局
财 神 殿
（天官马王殿）
致 火 会
太 阳 宫
机 房 殿
三 宇 殿
火 神 殿
文 昌 殿
天 后 殿
（三元阁）
来华照像
濮记花店
屠记饮作
上海花店
徐记饭店
胡记饭店
南京花店
斗姆阁
道和俱乐部
东岳大殿
五岳楼
塑像
品芳茶社照料间
（原关帝庙基地）
苏州花店
住户
豆腐
烟杂
鲜肉
牛肉
鸡鸭
生面
大饼
油煎
春苑茶社
花民理发
苏源兴豆浆
李记书店
小有天
中国照像
黎兴斋面馆
刘寿生牙医
支户川书店
徐记书店
东海理发
徐记饭店
胡记饭店
南京花店
吴记碗店
陈记碗店
住户
社记鸟店
李华记理发
陈华林茶店
姚文元百货
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Biaoyin, vol. 5) its main building being the Jifang Dian 機房殿 on the east side of the Sanqing Hall (see Figure 6-13). During the Ming period, according to Jiang Yihua 蔣以化, a Changshu 常熟 scholar of the sixteenth century, hundreds from the "small [loom] households" (*xiaohu* 小戶) boisterously gathered by the entrance of the temple every morning, waiting to be hired by the day by the "large [loom] households" (*dahu* 大戶). (See quotation in Duan and Zhang 1986:11) Some more important events in the field of the textile industry also took place at this temple. In the summer of 1601, for example, a protest led by Ge Cheng 葛成, a native of Kunshan 崑山, broke out following the imposition of new taxes on production and commerce by the eunuch tax-inspector Sun Long 孫隆. It was at Xuanmiao Guan that the crowds first converged, taking oaths to the god of their profession, and they then went on strike, burnt down the houses of the tax-collectors, and lynched hated local tyrants.[402] In another instance, local authorities, in response to the strike in 1734 by the spinners and weavers working on a day-hire basis, issued an order permanently banning any call to collective strikes. It was again in the Xuanmiao Guan that the stone-slab inscribed with this order was placed. (Cf. *Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 11; SLB, et al. 1981:15-17)

Some other callings had their foot in this temple as well. A wooden image of a Song tanner found in the west corner of the Sanqing Hall was mentioned by the nineteenth century Qing scholar Gu Zhentao 顧震濤 in his recording of the features of Xuanmiao Guan. (*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 5) We are not certain whether this suggests that during the Song period the temple already provided space for some small businesses. We are quite sure, however, that the temple became in the late imperial period an important place for medical and charitable activities,[403] probably because of the inextricable link between Daoist practice and medicine, as a hall of the Heavenly Physician (*Tianyi* 天醫) was also incorporated in the temple. (*Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian") According to the *Wumen Busheng* 吳門補乘 written by Qian Siyuan 錢思元 of the Qing, a wide-spread epidemic disease broke out in the Suzhou region in 1756 after the severe famine of the

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402 For the details of this event, see *Suzhou Zhizaoju Zhi*, vol. 12: "Zaji;" *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 147: "Zaji," no. 4; Chen Jiru's 陳繼儒 epitaph for Ge Cheng inscribed on Ge's tombstone in 1673, contained in SLB, et al. 1981:383-4, "Wu Ge Jiangjun Mubei;" Duan and Zhang 1986:181-4. For descriptions of it in English, see Santangelo 1993:102-4.

403 The charitable Yuying Tang 育嬰堂 (lit. "hall of infant-rearing"), for example, was built in the temple in 1674, where infants deserted by destitute families were taken care of. (*Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian;" *Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 5) In the east vicinity of the temple, there long existed a well-known pharmacy owned by the Qian 錢 family who specialised in curing rare diseases, which was in legend associated with the deeds of some Daoist immortals. (*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 5)

preceding year. The prefect urgently set up a temporary field station in Xuanmiao Guan and called upon twenty-five famous men of medicine of the region to treat patients for their illness. (See quotation in *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 149: "Zaji," no. 6)

Gentry and officials equally took the temple as one of the places for their social interactions.[404] One of the important local customs during the late imperial period was the so-called *baipai* 拜牌; in this, on New Year's Day the local gentry came to the main hall of the Sanqing 三清 (lit. "the Three Deities [of Daoist Religion]") in Xuanmiao Guan, praying to the heavenly gods for blessings for the coming year, before going to the prefectural and county *yamen* to exchange greetings with each other.[405] It may be an overstatement to assert that they all genuinely believed in Daoist religion or any other cults, because this activity had probably long became part of social propriety in the gentry/officials circle. Yet at least some of them saw Daoist practice as one of the magical resorts for coping with natural disasters such as drought and flood, as for example in 1438, 1645, 1703 and 1760 when prefects or even provincial governors led their entourage to Xuanmiao Guan to participate in Daoist rituals and pray either for rain or for the cessation of rain.[406]

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404 The earliest recorded event reflecting the affinity between scholars and the temple is dated back to the 780s when the abbot Zhang Chengde 張誠德 became close friends with Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (? - *c.* 881), a native of Changzhou and one of the famous writers of the Tang dynasty. (*Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian") According to Fan Chengda, in 1249 the prefect Zheng Lin 鄭霖 invited forty-two (including himself) imperial university students to a banquet in the Hall of "Spring Rain" (*chunyu* 春雨) after they had formally paid their respects to each other in Xuanmiao Guan in their order of reputation and seniority. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 2: "Fengsu") Gu Zhentao recorded that there were two small temples in Xuanmiao Guan dedicated to some earlier local officials for their merit and integrity. (*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 5) The attention paid to this temple by scholar-officials was such that it was constantly repaired or reconstructed under the supervision of local officials, and occasionally with financial support from the imperial court. (Cf. *Baicheng Yanshui*, op. cit.; *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 41: "Siguan," no. 3)

405 *Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 1: "Baipai." Cf. *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian."

406 See, e.g., *Wucheng Riji*, vol. B; *Baicheng Yanshui*, vol. 3: "Changzhouxian;" XXZ, vol. B: "Hu Fashi Qiyu" and vol. C: "Haiyan;" XXX: "Jintu Qiyu." Yet it should be noted that their "belief" was often highly *conditional*, in the sense that it depended on the efficacy of the deities and the morality of the rituals. In other words, for scholars-official and ordinary people, to heed religious ordinances and to participate in religious practice were plainly acts for practical reasons rather than for the salvation of their souls. If the deities were seen as efficacious, they would be rewarded; if not, punishment would often be inflicted on them. In two of the cases mentioned above, once rain did come after the ceremonies, the officials in question either donated part of their salaries to have the temple repaired, or directed the restoration of the statues of the deities. This practical stance seems to have been typical of officials and scholars in imperial China. Li Bai 李白 (701-762) in his eulogistic epitaph to the deeds of the prefect of Ezhou 鄂州 records that, at the time of a severe flood caused by prolonged, torrential rain, the prefect went to the temple of Chenghuang and warned the deity sternly: "Should the rain not stop in three

If the events and activities described above were all associated to various extents with Daoist religion or other cults, there were occasions when the temple Xuanmiao Guan functioned as a *place* where officials and other leading members of society met to discuss and resolve temporal problems of the city and region. In the early winter of 1633, to reward men of merit and to punish villains, the provincial governor summoned the officials, scholars and respected elders of the prefecture to Xuanmiao Guan for consultation. Money was awarded to a few well-doers, and, with the consent of the consulted, execution was imposed on four hated scoundrels. (*Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 147: "Zaji," no. 4) When the forces of the Taiping rebels advanced towards Suzhou in 1850, officials and the gentry again chose Xuanmiao Guan as the place where they temporally set up what they called a "joint-relief association" (*xiejiju* 協濟局) and met regularly, presumably to discuss the defence of the city.[407] (*Jiechao Biji*: "Sucheng Shixian Luelun") These kinds of gathering in the temple may not have been regular ones - a "trial" of criminals was rarely carried out publicly in Suzhou history, and more serious meetings concerning the security of the city would probably be held more often in the *yamen* or, as the case of the meeting in the face of the Manchu advance in 1645, in the Minglun Hall of the prefectural school-temple. (*Wucheng Riji*, vol. A) Yet these two events do show to a certain degree the temple's utilisation for social gatherings in the temporal interest of all residents of the prefecture.

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days, I am obliged to cut down the arbor trees [in the temple courtyard] and set your temple on fire." (*Li Taibai Quanji*, vol. 29: "Ezhou Cishi Weigong Dezheng Bei") An incident of student protest in 1711 Suzhou is another example of Chinese intellectuals' ambivalent attitude towards religion. Suspecting that the results of the first level imperial examination (*xiangshi* 鄉試) were fraudulent, over a thousand students, converging on Xuanmiao Guan, carried from the temple the image of the Wulushen 五路神 (worshipped by the populace as the deity of wealth; see *Qing Jia Lu*, vol. 1: "Jie Lutou"), taking it to the prefectural school temple and locking it up in the Minglun Tang 明倫堂 (lit. "the hall in which human relationships are illuminated"). (XXZ, vol. B: "Kangxi Xinmaoke Kechang An") This punishment was inflicted on the deity probably on the assumption that the deity had "allowed" the corrupt officials in charge of the examination to gain money by fraud at the expense of many talented students' future careers. This was certainly a sarcastic act, its innuendo being against the officials in question. However, had the students really been pious believers, they would hardly have treated the deity so rudely and had it "re-educated" in secular terms. The students bothered to pay so much attention to the deity probably because many other members of society believed in it; for the students, it became a useful tool for other purposes.

407 Yet these panelists, according to the eighteenth century scholar Shen Shouzhi 沈守之, were either corrupt officials or the profligate offspring of the rich who were not at all interested in defending the city, but merely took the meetings as additional opportunities for drinking and empty talk. (*Jiechao Biji*: "Sucheng Shixian Luelun")

6.3 PUBLIC URBAN SPACE

The multifarious functions assumed by Xuanmiao Guan as described above may induce an obvious analogy between its temple courtyard and what Norberg-Schulz (1971:84; 1980a:56, 59) sees as the most distinct element, or one of the two basic phenomena, of (European) urban environment, the city square.[408] Yet this temple courtyard should by no means be regarded as the "civic" centre in the European sense of the word, even if a civic centre in a European city is to be taken, as does Kostof (1992:153) who acknowledges the absence of such a square from the urban fabric of imperial China, "as a place for public business and the display of the trappings of power" rather than as signifying "communal self-government." It was rather a place attracting more than usual people there to conduct or participate in a wider than usual variety of activities. These activities, however, formed only a section, and often a small section, of the whole spectrum of social life of those living in the city and in its nearby countryside.

At least four characteristics of the social function of this temple place can be enunciated in support of this argument. First, this was not a centre of commerce and trade, as the market held here was merely a supplementary instrument of local life. The real inter-regional and international trade was carried out in the west suburb of the city, especially along the canal stretching from Chang Gate westward to Feng Bridge and the Grand Canal. Second, it was not a religious centre, as the temple of Xuanmiao Guan was merely an independent unit of Daoist establishments, and Daoist

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408 City squares in medieval Europe certainly did not have to be of a geometrical square shape, but were open "places" which acted as settings for churches, guildhalls, town halls or other prominent buildings. Gerald Burke (1976:18 note) offers an apt explanation for the use of this term:

> In town-planning jargon the word "place" is taken to correspond with the French *place*, German *platz*, Italian *piazza* etc., i.e. "an open space in city or town usually surrounded by buildings." The English word "square" is nearest in meaning though a "place" is not necessarily four-sided or right-angled.

A similar clarification is put forward by Jere Stuart French (1983:23):

> A square can be square, hence its English name. But the various name derived from Latin (*platea*; place or widened street), are more cautious, and refer to location rather than shape: *Place* (French), *Piassa* (Italian), *Praça* (Portuguese), *Plaza* (Spanish), *Plateia* (Greek).

It should also be noted that, although the persistence of the existence of city square has been a tradition of many European cities, the social meaning and concept of the square varied significantly in time and space. A discussion of the urban space of Suzhou in the imperial era by reference to traditional European cities does not mean a sweeping generalisation of this European urban phenomenon.

religion, like Buddhist religion, did not have a hierarchy generated from within to fulfil its own organisational needs, and thus existed in what Mote (1977:115) calls "atomised structure." In this sense, Xuanmiao Guan, with the social status of its abbot being no higher than his counterparts in even the most remote areas, was merely one of the discrete temples of the Daoist cult coexisting with other numerous diffuse religions, rather than a unit within a diocesan or synodal structure of authority.

Third, no government offices were located inside or in the vicinity of Xuanmiao Guan in such a manner that they formed, physically or organisationally. an interrelated part of it.[409] As for merchant and craft associations, different in their relationship with the local authorities from those in medieval Europe, which were usually tightly bound up with municipal governments, (see, e.g., Mumford 1961:271) only one of the guilds of the textile industry was situated in the temple, while three others (*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 5) and those of other callings were widely scattered either within or outside the city walls, notably in the west suburbs. Thus here certainly was not the locality for any kind of concentrated merchant and craft institutions. Fourth and finally, this was not a place where public facilities were clustered together. Official libraries were in the *yamen* and school-temples, while private libraries were found elsewhere in the city and in the countryside; scholars came here for pleasure-strolling or new discoveries, rather than for their career pursuits. There were no equivalents of a European hospital in and around the temple, and the gathering of men of medicine in the temple in 1756 was organised temporarily by the prefect so that efforts could be put together to deal with the unprecedented spread of an epidemic disease. Permanent recreational facilities, such as theatres, were concentrated along the street called Shantang 山塘 by the canal running from Tiger Hill (Huqiu 虎丘) in the north-west suburb to Chang Gate, whereas only those who did small-scale variety shows and story-tellings came to the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan, particularly during the annual festivals.

Norberg-Schulz, (1985:60-1) from a phenomenological point of view, insists that the square, functioning as a city centre,

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409 The Ming state-run textile factory-bureau (Zhizaoju 織造局) was located in the south-west, two alleys away from the temple, and during the Qing period it was reconstructed and called by the locals North Bureau (Beiju 北局) so as to distinguish it from the new one set up in 1646 in the south-east part of the city. The location of this bureau, however, was probably largely determined by the partitioning of urban space, and was thus only physically adjacent to the temple, without a strong sense of mutual incorporation of the two establishments.

> does not necessarily make a particular choice manifest, often it rather condenses what is spread out along the street into one complex but comprehensive image. Choice is thus facilitated, at the same time as the world of the community as perceived as a whole. . . . The square thus appears as a complementary form to the "exterior" of the settlement. The sense of arrival is here fulfilled; what was a promise when the settlement was seen from the outside, becomes an understood world.

This statement may hold in interpreting the nature of urban space in pre-modern Europe. Yet the above analysis of the social functions of Xuanmiao Guan has shown that it was anything but applicable to the case of Suzhou (and probably of whole China), even if we were to regard the temple courtyard as somewhat analogous to a city square in pre-modern European in terms of its unroofed space, its multiple functions and the geometrical centrality of its location. This temple courtyard did not condense what was spread out along the streets into one complex but comprehensive image, but merely displayed a fraction of it; it was, in fact, the streets that more fully represented the richness of the urban features of the city of Suzhou and at the same time reflected the different modes of living in their corresponding districts. Diverse choices could fully be facilitated only in the appropriate districts, just as some specific needs could be met in the temple of Xuanmiao Guan. The sense of arrival therefore could be fully fulfilled, not by browsing and meditating upon any single space, but by walking through the representative streets in all three districts of the city and its west suburbs. Only in this way might that which was a promise when the city was seen from the outside - or from afar - start to become an understood world.

Nevertheless, the nearly ubiquitous assumption of multifarious functions (except for those of exclusive official cults) by an important temple in a city or a market town was indeed a conspicuous phenomenon in Chinese urban development during the late imperial period. It seems to have been a natural process in a traditional society that a public religious establishment had a tendency to draw various secular activities to its vicinity, as did important churches in many pre-modern European towns, since its service cut across all sections of society and consequently the venue afforded people more opportunities for interaction. The scale, reputation and the geometrical position of Xuanmiao Guan may jointly have facilitated this process. What appears to have been a typical Chinese experience was that these secular activities could, and in mainland China almost invariably would, take place within the compound of the temple; i.e. in the temple courtyard which

was supposed to be part of the sanctuary.

If we have kept in mind the most human-centred world view of the Chinese, which we have discussed in section 6.1.2, this seemingly odd phenomenon should not be surprising at all. It is also worth noting that the religious and physical attributes of the temple in question directly facilitated the everyday activities in this peculiar way. The social orientation of Daoist and popular cults, and, to some extent, even of the vulgarised Buddhism,[410] was practical and utilitarian in nature,[411] and their rituals and practice were aimed at improving life in this world rather than in the world beyond or at the salvation of the soul. Consequently, many people's belief in them was highly temporary and conditional - they believed in them when they thought that they needed to do so, and they might continue their belief only if their prayer or worship appeared to have been efficacious. Probably because of this practical orientation, the temples of these religions not only tolerated but also encouraged temporal activities within their spatial confinements, which were not at all contradictory to the social purpose of their existence and practice. It was precisely these temples in cities which invariably contained spacious courtyards, and at the same time were open to all sections of society.[412] Certainly not everyone approved of this practice. Some vague and infrequent voicings of imperial scholars' repugnance for the temporal invasion of these sanctuaries could be heard. A poem by the Qing scholar Cai Yun 蔡雲, depicting the New Year festivals in Suzhou, is quoted in the *Qing Jia Lu* (vol. 1: "Xinnian"):

> To the temple of West Garden outside the city walls and Xuanmiao Guan inside the city walls

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410 Elliot (1955:26) holds that the greatest positive contribution of Buddhism to Chinese religious ideas was that of attaining Enlightenment, and thereby salvation, through the merit of the Bodhisattvas. Yet like Daoism, Chinese Buddhism has also tended to manifest two very different facets. One is the scholarly, mystical Buddhism of the reputable monks and masters. The other facet is represented by a more "corrupt" Buddhism which has contributed greatly to popular beliefs and has, in turn, absorbed many religious practices of an unorthodox nature.

411 This practical orientation of religion was fundamentally determined by the general Chinese world view which we mentioned earlier; but it may also have had some connection with the Chinese attitude towards reason, which is summarised by Graham (1989:7): "reason is for questions of means; for your ends in life listen to aphorism, example, parable, and poetry.". The lasting effect of this attitude in China was "to convince everyone except the Mohists that problem-solving without useful purpose is a pointless frivolity." Graham also indicates that in the temporal sphere it was those inventions which seem generally to be ones not obviously *useful* that the Chinese neglected. (Op. cit. 316)

412 Some of the official temples (e.g. Confucian temples), schools, imperial examination complexes and *yamen* also had large courtyards of their own, but access to them was very exclusive.

People availing themselves of this idle period and of the bustle and excitement go to enjoy sport and play their fill.
The pity is that the so wonderful Buddhist edifice and Immortals' Palace
Have been mixed back into tea houses and wine shops.

Judging from the context of other poems by the same scholar, one may suggest that what was so regrettable to him may not have been so much the seeming profanity as the disturbance of the serenity of the two temples which he himself preferred.

It would be profoundly wrong to assume that the exploitation of the temple courtyard was *caused* by the lack of any open space of considerable size in cities, which, similar to the city square of pre-modern Europe, might otherwise have allowed multifarious functions to occur in it. The fact of Chinese cities' lack of public open space is noted by many scholars both in China and in the West. (See, e.g., Mote 1973:58-9; Kostof 1992:153; Li 1982:404-5; Liu 1990:119) Few have tried to explain the reasons for it, but Li Yunhe (1982:404-5) argues that the early market usually combined with a public well (*shijing* 市井) within the Chinese settlement, much the same originally as in Europe, was later tightly controlled by the central authority; and that the materialisation of this control - enclosure by walls - undermined the possibility of the emergence of a city square. This argument is certainly an oversimplification of the very complicated issue and can thus hardly be seen as cogent. Its shortcomings probably lie intrinsically more in the validity of the question itself than in the answer. Logically speaking, the question of why the square as a civic centre did not arise in pre-modern Chinese cities, appears to be equivalent to the question of why the Chinese never arrived at modern science, which is regarded by Graham (1989-317) as a pseudo-problem, because one generally asks and tries to answer why a phenomenon did occur, not why the same complex set of conditions did not come together at some other time and place. The city square appeared in Europe as a *unique* phenomenon, rather than a universal urban feature, depending on a variety of social, political, psychological and other conditions, and it is pointless to ask in narrow terms why it did not emerge in cities of other parts of the world. Therefore a probably more useful and logical approach to the issue is to ask, as many Western urbanists do,[413] what

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413 Zücker, (1959:19-20) for example, explains the emergence of the square in Europe in sociological, aesthetic, and philosophical terms:

> Only within a civilisation where the anonymous human being had become a "citizen," where democracy had unfolded to some extent, could the gathering place become important enough to take on a specific shape. This sociological development was paralleled by an aesthetic

unique conjunction of factors gave rise to the incorporation of public squares in European cities as early as in Greek civilisation; and, likewise, what was the *raison d'être* of wall-enclosed public space in cities of imperial China. It is the second part of the question that concerns us here.

The distinctive mode of the use of temple courtyard as a public urban space in imperial China's cities may be dealt with, though inconclusively, in two perspectives: that of socio-political relationship between the city and the countryside, and that of the distinctive Chinese concept of socialised space. Let us begin with the first. European cities in the medieval period were corporate entities of their own. Their city walls, as Healy (1968:13) writes,

> marked off small islands of freedom in a land where all, except the nobility and a relatively few free peasants, were bound to a particular patch of soil and required to work for, and pay heavy dues to, their lord and master. Those living inside the wall called everyone else "foreigner" (the word meant "outsider") and the true townsman, the burgess, had good reason to look down upon the unfree peasant, the villain, living in some tiny remote village in a one-roomed hut shared with his animals.
>
> The right to live in the town was jealously guarded, and

> phenomenon: only when a full consciousness of space evolved and at least a certain sensitive perception of spatial expansion began to spread - one may compare the essentially frontal sculpture of Egypt and Mesopotamia with the roundness of Greek classical sculpture - only then could the void before, around, and within a structure become more than a mere counterpart to articulated volume.
> . . . To one who believes in the primacy of ideas, there seems no doubt that the growing concept of man in relation to his environment and the awareness of the human scale gave a stronger impetus to the shaping of space within the town than the merely socio-functional need for a gathering place. One may even play with the idea that both trends are not simply coincidental but go back to one last cause: the sanction of reason as the guiding principle of human life, which Greece contributed to the history of man.

All these factors must jointly have contributed to the emergence and probable conventionalisation of the square in ancient Greek cities, although it seems doubtful whether we could take "the sanction of reason as the guiding principle of human life" as the ultimate cause of the development of this distinctive urban feature. It is our understanding that Confucianism, developing as a school of thought from approximately the turn of the fifth century B.C., thereafter remained the principal guide to Chinese civilisation and from the Han dynasty onwards became the official doctrine of the bureaucratically run society. Characterised by its rationalism, Confucianism, as Mote (1971:45) argues, takes the absolute primacy of humanistic ethics in a man-centred world as its ultimate touchstone; it is "a humanism - the most unequivocal the world has known." (71) Chinese civilisation, however, did not generate the public open space in its cities. Therefore one may have to take a more cautious line over this issue - it is perhaps the specific content of the "guiding principle of human life" that had really mattered.

foreigners were forbidden to be in it except by day.

This kind of sociological model that distinguishes sharply between city and village, as Ward (1985:173) points out, is indeed essentially a Western one. I have discussed in preceding chapters how cities in imperial China were not regarded as isolated administrative units but principally as an instrument of the imperial government; in other words, they were administrative centres of the areas in which they were located, which were largely rural.

This distinctive urban-rural continuum became ever more the reality during the late imperial period, as the growth of trade stimulated commercial agriculture and handicrafts and spurred expansion of rural markets, and as greater integration of the central place hierarchy and growing market participation facilitated the flow of ideas as well as goods between city and country. (Rawski 1985a:9) This situation was more in evidence in the Lower Yangzi core as the most advanced, urbanised and one of the most densely populated regions during that period. If the square in a city of medieval Europe could be identified as the property of the city itself, and as a public place which was maintained by the city authority and to which its citizens psychologically attached themselves, the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan should then be regarded as the property of the temple which was nevertheless more than liable to interventions by the imperial authority, and as a public place which was maintained by the abbot of the temple with the patronage of the government and individuals residing either within the city or without, and to which residents of the whole prefecture psychologically attached themselves. In this sense, the square in an European city, as part of its corporate entity, was effectively enclosed by city walls, whereas the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan was symbolically demarcated by the walls of the temple itself, yet at the same time open to all sections of society, both urban and rural.

This line of argument, however, does not mean a denial of any difference between the city and the countryside in imperial China. It simply emphasises the facts that Xuanmiao Guan, like many other temples of the same nature locating within the walls of regional and local capital cities, was not a corporate property of the city of Suzhou itself, partly because the city was not an entity of its own; that access to the temple was not exclusively limited to the people residing within the city walls; and that the necessity for the city walls and temple walls lay at least as much in their practical use as in their symbolic attributes in terms both of separating the within from the without, and of distinguishing different social

institutions. Only one occasion is recorded on which Xuanmiao Guan was used principally by the city residents. According to the *Wuxian Zhi*, (vol. 52A: "Fengsu," no. 1) it was a custom in Suzhou prefecture during the Qing period (probably the Ming as well) that tribute was paid to the heavenly gods every second month, this custom being known as *jie tianxiang* 解天餉 (lit. "escorting provisions to heavenly gods"). Money was contributed to every local temple to the God of Earth by families and individuals living in the area which the God governed, before the God's image was carried, in a grand ceremonial parade, to the Daoist temple Shangzhen Guan 上真觀 on Mt. Qionglong 穹窿 in the west of the prefecture, where the sacrificial money was incinerated in a petitioning for blessings from the heavenly gods for all those living in the prefectural territory. It was in Xuanmiao Guan, however, that the money collected from those residing in the city (perhaps including its near suburbs?) was "sent" to the gods.

Could it be that, because of the prestige of Xuanmiao Guan and its geographical centrality, the ritual ceremony was conveniently conducted here by the city residents instead of their taking the trouble to proceed to the distant mountain? Or could it be that the interest of the city residents and their way of life were differentiated either consciously or unconsciously from those of the country people, and therefore the ritual ceremony was conducted separately for specific blessings from the same gods? In any event, we understand from the context of this record that the ritual ceremony was performed in Xuanmiao Guan not to the entire exclusion of people other than those in the city - the sentence "city residents deliver the money to Xuanmiao Guan" is not equivalent to "only city residents are allowed to do it here." We also understand that it was the temple of Shangzhen on Mt. Qionglong, not Xuanmiao Guan, that should be seen as having been the more appropriate and effective locality for a ritual ceremony dedicated to the *heavenly* gods - the accounts in the *Wuxian Zhi* of the proceedings of the ceremony conducted in the former are lengthy and include the statement that the ceremony was intended for the good of the whole prefecture, whereas the latter is mentioned at the end of the passage with a single, short sentence. In fact, the record of this prefectural ritual ceremony in the *Qing Jia Lu* (vol. 2: "Jie Tianxiang"), on which the description of it in the *Wuxian Zhi* is largely based, does not mention any particular preference for the city residents regarding the ceremony. This indicates that this preference probably had not become a common practice by 1830 when the *Qing Jia Lu* was published.

Now we turn to the second perspective - the Chinese concept of socialised space - in which the distinctive mode of the use of the temple courtyard as a public urban space can be discussed. It is important to note that, for the Chinese, it was felt that any space of a considerable size facilitating social interactions in a man-made environment should exist for a certain reason rather than for its own sake; that is, it must not be an independent entity of its own but pertain to a certain institution so as to be explainable and therefore meaningful. The essentiality of the void was appreciated very early in China indeed, as we read in the *Lao Zi* (chap. 11):

> Thirty spokes share the hub [of a wheel];
> It is on the [centre] void that the utility of the vehicle depends.
> Knead clay into a vessel;
> It is on the void that the utility of the vessel depends.
> Pierce doors and windows for a room;
> It is on the voids that the utility of the room depends.
> Therefore benefit comes from what is there;
> Utility from what is not there.

Yet in the Chinese built-environments, any unoccupied area that was not incorporated in a certain building compound was, apart from the cases of streets or alleys, seldom designated by the Chinese with words whose meanings are close to that of "space,"[414] that clichéd term of the field of architecture in our time. Its equivalent in modern Chinese is *kongjian* 空間, a word which has been "re-adopted" from Japanese.[415] (Liu, et al. 1984:190) The characters *suo* 所, *chu* 處, *di* 地,

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414 The term "space" refers here to its narrower sense of limited areas unoccupied by buildings or other physical objects, rather than to its sense of the unlimited three-dimensional expanse in which all things are located. The latter is denoted by the Chinese character *yu* 宇, as we read in the *Mo Zi* (vol. 10: "Jingshang," no. 40): "*Yu* encompasses all different places." The development of the denotation of *yu* is closely associated with that of the character *zhou* 宙, both jointly epitomising interesting Chinese time-space concepts. The equivalent of the term "cosmos" in Chinese language is *yuzhou* 宇宙; its two characters literally mean "eaves" and "ridgepole," (*Huainan Zi*, vol. 6: "Lanming" with Gao's commentaries) parts of a roof, or the boundary markers of a commonly-noted kind of enclosed space. At the same time, as their etymologies imply, they have a strong sense of "space" and "time" repectively. (*Shuowen Jiezi Zhu*, chaps. 7B & 12B) This is explicitly stated in the *Huainan Zi* (vol. 11: "Qisu Xun"): "Moving back to the past and forth to the present are called *zhou*; the four quarters and from above to below are called *yu*." It is equally clearly explained, though with somewhat different intent, in the text of *Zhuang Zi* (vol. 6: "Geng Sang Chu"): "That which has reality, and in which there is no fixed place to settle in, is *yu*. That which has endless continuity, and in which there is no beginning and end to search for, is *zhou*."

415 Wang Li (1980:528-9) shows how the elements of the Chinese language have taken deep root in Japanese, the ideographs of Japanese being basically borrowed from ancient Chinese. "The Chinese ideographs in Japan," he writes, "have held a similar position to Greek and Latin in European countries. They can be used as the basis on which new Japanese words are constructed." *Kongjian* is one of the words in Japanese (*kukan*),

etc. all indicate "place" rather than "space;" even the character *chang* 場, the second component of which the modern word *guangchang* 廣場 (lit. "vast level ground") is composed, denoting "public square," emphasises the flat surface of an open piece of ground rather than the attribute of a space with boundaries. The absence of a term for the latter in Chinese (and thus possibly of the concept it denotes?) indicates that any such things as we call a space had to be specifically designated for its particular function. To put it the other way round, any confusion of functions in a space was likely to cause psychological discomfort, even though such functions may have been merely nominal. In this sense, it was not impossible that Cai Yun's criticism, in his poem quoted earlier above, of the invasion by tea houses and wine shops of the two temples also reflected his personal disapproval of the situation in which there was improper mingling of social functions of different categories; and we might expect there to have been similar complaints from him had this situation occurred for other social institutions, such as schools and government offices.

Such an architectural space had to be defined nominally *and* physically, so that it could be distinguished both in concept and in reality from other spaces of different categories defined likewise, and that the human environments could be maintained in order. The most convenient and probably preferable way to accomplish this materially was to enclose the space with walls. Here we come again to the importance of walls to the Chinese, which, as Needham (1971:42) points out, is shown by the fact that several words were used to describe different forms of them: high walls round courtyards were called *qiang* 牆 or *yong* 墉; house walls and part walls, *bi* 壁; low walls in gardens, etc., *yuan* 垣; and the inner north-south walls separating the side rooms from the central halls, *xu* 序.[416] Liu Xi 劉熙 of the Eastern Han elaborates the explanations of these terms, except the last one, in his *Shi Ming* (vol. 5: "Shi Gongshi"):

> *Bi* connotes *pi* 辟 ["ward off" or "keep away"]; it is to ward off and resist the wind and cold.
> *Qiang* connotes *zhang* 障 ["obstruct"]; it is what is used to shield

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derived from ancient Chinese which have been given a different shade of meaning, and borrowed back into Chinese. I use the term "re-adopted" here simply because I am as yet not clear whether this kind of loan-word of which the component characters are of Chinese origin should strictly speaking be identified in linguistic terms as "borrowed" from Japanese.

416 Cf. *Er Ya*, chap. 5: "Shi Gong;" *Shuowen Jiezi*, chap. 9B. This wall is located on either the east or west side of a building, separating the east or west *xiang* 廂 ("side room") from the central *tang* 堂 ("main hall"). Guo Pu 郭璞 (A.D. 276-324) explains when commenting on the *Er Ya* that "as such it distinquishes [in an orderly way] the inside from the outside."

oneself.
Yuan connotes *yuan* 援 ["help" or "aid"]; it is what man relies on and thus takes as his protection.
Yong connotes *rong* 容 ["to obstruct and shelter"];[417] it is what is used to hide one's body and appearance.

The practical considerations reflected in these explanations were almost universal in human history. What seems to have been distinctive was (and still is) the ubiquity of various kinds of walls in China's landscape.[418] They were not only the first physical structures to be seen when approached from without, but often also the first artifacts of a settlement, and sometimes even the only ones to be depicted in literature.[419] Walls in China became in fact an important part of the vehicle of distinguishing different categories in an ordered human environment, and the social and conceptual function of walls out-weighed their physical function of defence and obstruction - they may not have physically bounded the spaces which they enclosed as much as they symbolised the manner of classification in the organisation of society. Hence, in a manner similar to the case of individual buildings *vis-à-vis* building compounds, an unroofed area would be perceived as an active and meaningful space only if it was explicitly attached to or incorporated in the spatial domain of a certain social institution, and, more importantly, properly enclosed by walls (usually in combination with buildings), the most common case being that of the courtyard.

This is reflected, for example, in the nuance of the way in which the word *guangchang* 廣場 is used denoting "open level ground" rather than "public square" in its modern sense, in the "New Year" section of the *Qing Jia Lu* (vol. 1) describing socialised spaces in two different locations. The first location is in the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan. One of the stanzas of the poem *You Guan* 游觀 (Visiting the Temple) by Fan Laizong 范來宗 of the Qing runs: "the huge earthly *guangchang* surpasses the Market of Cranes;[420] the various heavenly images resemble [those of] the divine palace." This is obviously a positive description of the courtyard with the word *guangchang*, juxtaposed with the eulogistic analogy of the marvellous halls of the temple. The second location is in the manor of the Zhu 朱 family near Wende 文德 Bridge outside Chang Gate. The words that Gu Lu 顧錄, the author of the *Qing Jia Lu*,

417 See *Er Ya*, vol. 5: "Shi Gong," no. 5 with Xing Bing's 邢昺 (932-1010) commentary.
418 For comments on the ubiquity of walls in China by western scholars, see Sirén (1929) and Meyer (1991:4-5).
419 This predilection can be sensed, e.g., in *Shi Jing*, vol. 11-1: "Xiao Ya": "Hongyan" and vol. 16-2: "Da Ya": "Mian."
420 For some information about the Market of Cranes, see section 2.3.3.

uses concering it appear to be somewhat negative: "it is merely a *guangchang*" - with the implication that such a space, crude as it was in his mind, should not have assumed its function as an open market as it curiously had. Gu Lu's slight implicit contempt (or at least bewilderment) about it is revealed not in the words he uses to account for its location (i.e. in the west suburb rather than in the city proper), but in those for the space itself - "merely open ground" which was for him difficult to define both socially and institutionally. A space like this could hardly have been highly regarded unless it had been properly arranged and preferably enclosed by walls for socially and institutionally categorised functions. The example of these two accounts may be trivial, but the point is not. Whether or not a space was enclosed by walls concerned not only its conceptual and psychological correctness, but also its viability in time. The multi-purpose nature of the courtyard of Xuanmiao Guan has persisted along with the courtyard itself to the present day, whereas the function of the open ground near Wende Bridge was very temporary, as the space may soon have been assigned to other uses or occupied by newly built structures.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this chapter is to address two particular points: (1) how general features of architecture in traditional Chinese cities should properly be interpreted, and (2) what was the mode of the use of public urban spaces and why. In this concluding section, I briefly summarise these two points. The reason for incorporating the discussion of the public urban space of Suzhou along with the discussion of building compounds and courtyards into this single chapter, instead of combining it with the discussion of the city structure in the preceding chapter, lies in an understanding of the urban and architectural nature of traditional China. Thus the summary starts with the first point.

I have indicated that social division was not found less between the city and the countryside than in class and occupation which, in organisation, were manifested in diverse social institutions. The spatial dimension of such social division was, in terms of daily activities, analogously speaking, not so much based on the urban-rural dichotomy as on the formation of building compounds under the influence of the courtyard, which were the physical embodiments of different institutions and, at the same time, the basic spatial components of the city. In the architecture of a certain region, however, correspondence between differentiation of social

institutions and differentiation of building forms and types was remarkably weak. Individual buildings were classified into different types according to their forms and their spatial functions, but they seldom stood as independent structures that performed their designated social functions; instead, they were, or at least should in theory have been, incorporated as integral elements into building compounds which differed from each other principally in ornamentation and yet resembled each other in form and style. In this sense, the uniformity of building forms and styles between the city and the countryside of traditional China is not to be seen as evidence of the urban-rural continuum, but as a display of the typical lack of formal bond between building types and social institutions; any uniqueness of a building was manifested in its location, appellation, and history that was recorded in words, rather than its particular form and style. This appears to be one of the traits of Chinese architecture that sets it apart from Western experience.

It was each of these ubiquitous building compounds, not individual buildings, that acted as a basic unit of spatial organisation of the city (or any other kinds of human settlements), and the courtyard played an essential role in incorporating all its elements into a coherent whole. This realisation leads to the second point which has been developed in this chapter. Apart from that of the streets,[421] any space of notable size which assumed any unambiguous functions in the city most commonly took definite shape in the courtyard. Hence the public urban space. I have cited the example of the use of the courtuard of the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan to illustrate that this mode of spatial arrangement was in accordance both with the traditional conception of socialised space and with the socio-political reality of the city. A purposeful space had to belong, and thus be attached, to a certain social institution physically embodied in a certain building compound. The intramural open spaces without walled compounds consisted only of either streets and alleys or vacant land, the latter, apart from constituting part of the area within the city walls, being institutionally not much different from the unoccupied pieces of ground around village houses. On the other hand, the city was not a corporate entity of its own; i.e. it was not strongly a social institution separated from its surrounding countryside in both jurisdictional and administrative terms. It was the temples, among many

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421 The Tang gazetteer *Wudi Ji* tells us that the city of Suzhou had "over three hundred alleys (*xiang* 巷)," whereas it makes no mention of any city streets or roads. Prior to the Northern Song period, the character *xiang* was, as I have indicated in section 3.2.1, denominative only of the alleys within a walled residential ward. Does not this reflect the pre-conception of the author that any features that lacked institutional attachment were not worth mentioning, even if they were as important as the streets of the city?

other edifies, that formed distinguishable social institutions. Therefore, when we talk about the non-existence in Chinese cities of public squares, which were essential to most European cities, it is not so much that the city residents "had less need of them" (Mote 1977:116) than their European counterparts, as that spaces of this kind were inconceivable and meaningless to them. The courtyards of large temples, characterised by their utilitarian functions in society, became the loci of miscellaneous social activities.

CHAPTER 7 THE CITY IN *FENGSHUI* INTERPRETATIONS

This last chapter deals with the application of *fengshui* 風水 (lit. "wind and water," often translated as "Chinese geomancy")[422] to the city of Suzhou and its urban constructions during the second half of the imperial period. The reason for devoting a whole chapter to this topic lies principally in the current ambiguous approaches to studies of the application of *fengshui* to the cities in traditional China.[423] Undoubtedly, *fengshui* ideas were indeed an integral part of the urban phenomenon in imperial China. The major questions, however, are to what extent and in what way these ideas were applied to city construction and development, and what physical and psychological effects they may have had upon the cities. I shall try to answer these questions in this chapter by demonstrating that the chief mode of its application is characterised, not by actual practice in the physical construction of the city at the urban level, but by interpretations involving diverse aspects of the city, ranging from its geographical location and natural setting to its form, space and individual structures. The symbols employed in them derive not only from the *fengshui* manuals, but also from popular conceptions and ideas.

The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first, I briefly introduce problems concerning the origins of *fengshui* and the ideas of its two major schools from the Tang onwards. Second, I discuss the one and only documented piece of active *fengshui* advice in history on the urban construction of the city of Suzhou, and argue that the failure of that mid-twelfth-century attempt to use *fengshui* was somewhat

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422 March (1968:253, note 2) indicates that *fengshui* is not the "geomancy" of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 4, Oxford, 1933): "The art of divination by means of signs derived from the earth, as by the figure assumed by a handful of earth thrown down upon some surface. . . . Hence, usually, divination by means of lines or figures formed by jotting down on paper a number of dots at random."

423 Freedman (1971:138) states: "In the *fêng-shui* of buildings we see a kind of political hierarchy, the apex of which is formed by the state and the base by individual dwellings. Between these two extremes lie administrative units, cities, towns, villages, lineages, and segments of lineages." What Freedman means by "the *fengshui* of buildings" seems to be *ideas*, not practice in physical building activities. Some other scholars are less cautious on this subject and tend to see uncritically its influence as extended to the site-choosing and physical construction of most (if not all) pre-modern Chinese cities. Wheatley, (1971:419) for instance, asserts that ". . . no city was ever planned without the advice of a geomancer." In the context of his work, by "geomancer" he means the specialist in *fengshui* theories and practice. Feuchtwang's (1974:3) passing statement, though more careful in wording, appears to follow a similar line of thinking: "Chinese towns [i.e. 'cities' in the context of our discussion], ideally, are planned on a strict North-South axis, with gates at the four quarters subject to the whole symbolism of feng-shui cosmology."

inevitable in the particular circumstances of the prefectural government at that time. Third, I deal with three cases of *fengshui* interpretations of the city of Suzhou from the Yuan period down to the late Qing. In the fourth section, I propose that, whereas the ambiguous attitudes of the imperial scholar-officials towards *fengshui* may be seen as having hindered its application to the building of cities, it was the particular social and ideological context of regional or local government, staffed by these scholar-officials, that may have played the most significant role in preventing urban constructions from being influenced by it. In the fifth section, I extensively analyse *fengshui* involvement in a specific building project - the construction of a major bridge outside Xu Gate, and suggest that, because of the collective stance of the imperial scholar-officials towards *fengshui* and, more importantly, the social and ideological context of Suzhou as a regional capital city of imperial China, *fengshui* ideas exerted their influences more often and more strongly on the building activities at the level of local corporate groups, than on the city construction at the level of government enterprises. The outcome of the former was usually minor structures with which only small groups of the residents identified themselves, whereas the outcome of the latter determined the form and spatial pattern of the city. I conclude this chapter in the sixth and final section.

7.1 ORIGINS AND PRINCIPLES OF *FENGSHUI*

Fengshui was defined appositely by Chatley as "the art of adapting the residences of the living and the dead so as to cooperate and harmonise with the local currents of the cosmic breath." (Needham 1956:359) Its origins are vague, as March (1968:260) has noted; and this leaves room for disagreement.[424] Yet

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424 J. J. M. de Groot, (1897:938) for instance, holds that its elementary principles were practically applied already in Zhou times. Needham (1956:359-63; 1962:240) takes a more cautious stance by arguing that although it developed during the Warring States period when Zou Yan's 鄒衍 (*c.* 305-240 B.C.) correlative cosmology and philosophic magic were flourishing. In Wang Chong's 王充 (A.D. 27-*c.* 97) time the system had developed sufficiently for him to argue against it. In the *Shi Ji* (vol. 127: "Rizhi Liezhuan," no. 67), a class of diviners known as the *kanyu jia* 堪輿家 ("diviners by the canopy of Heaven and chariot of Earth," as translated by Needham), has been mentioned along with six other classes of diviner. Moreover, the bibliography of the *Han Shu* mentions two books which should be relevant to *fengshui*, namely, the *Kanyu Jingui* 堪輿金匱 (Golden box of geomancy) and the *Gongzhai Dixing* 宮宅地形 (Terrestrial conformations for palaces and houses), but both are long since lost. Needham (ibid.) further suggests that its consolidation took place in the Three Kingdoms period (A.D. 220-280) when Guan Lu 管輅 (A.D. 209-256) probably wrote about it. Both the *Sanguo Zhi* ("Wei Shu," vol. 29: "Guan Lu") and the *Sanguo Yanyi* (chap. 69) mention Kuan Lu in length. Wright's (1977:54) statement on this subject appears more unambiguous: although various ingredients of the

whatever the case, there is no doubt, as Feuchtwang (1974:16) indicates, that the symbolism of town-planning and of important buildings (and the divining for auspicious dates for the commencement of building) has a history many centuries longer in China than has the *fengshui* of graves and houses, although *fengshui* later shares this symbolism.[425] Although it is true that *fengshui* theories, if we are to take them as a formulated system of ideas that are faithfully denoted by that specific term, found their sources in fragmentary expositions contained in many pre-Han documents, and in the recorded ancient architectural activities embodying cosmological conceptions of that age, we should be cautious not to over-stretch the evidence to classify all activities of site-choosing and symbolism of city construction in early Chinese history under the term *fengshui* or its other alternative terms.[426]

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system can be traced back to the Zhou, "the origins of *feng-shui* are to be found in the systematic organicism that was characteristic of the Han synthesis;" and the subtradition during the late Zhou, Qin and Han of the manipulating the Five Elements system and the symbols of the *Book of Changes*, and of the practice of surveying the ambience or emanations (*qi* 氣) of a site or situation to determine its favourable or unfavourable character, "persisted and was fused with *feng-shui* theories in the A.D. third or fourth century."

425 March, (1968:260) apparently agreeing with Feuchtwang on this issue, writes: "Burial geomancy seems to have arisen later than the geomancy of city and building sites. . . . Earlier evidence is fragmentary and seems to show merely the existence of a diffuse vitalism, or some other element of thought later taken up by geomancy." It is also certain that during the periods of the Eastern Jin 晉 (A.D. 317-420) and the Southern Dynasties (420-589), *fengshui* theory and practice were greatly promoted in South-east China. Two important books which are still extant were produced during this period of time in the South. One is the *Zang Shu* ascribed to Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324) which is regarded now as containing the first known appearance of the word *fengshui* as the specific term denoting this elaborated system. The other is the *Huangdi Zhaijing* by Wang Wei 王微 of the Liu Song dynasty. Wright (1977:54) even speculates that it was in the South and in this period of time that the system of *fengshui* became loosely appended to the imperial cosmology of the city. Its flourishing during this specific period of time and in this particular region seems logical: the very sense of security as the first priority of those who had recently fled from wars in Central China between A.D. 307 and 312, might have stimulated the upsurge in various supernatural activities, especially geomancy and divination which were supposed to determine the fortune of habitats for both the living and the dead, while the complexity of topographical conditions in the South may have contributed to the elaboration of *fengshui* ideas which transformed features of natural environment into various cosmological conceptions. Although later imperial periods saw the continued flourishing of *fengshui* theories and practices throughout whole China, the leading forces of its development seem to have always come from the South.

426 Other terms to some degree equivalent to, or closely associated with, *fengshui* are *kanyu* 堪輿, *xingfa* 形法 (lit. "method of configuration"), *dili* 地理 (lit. "texture of the earth;" identical to the modern term "geography"), etc. Among them *kanyu* is probably the earliest and most important one. The two characters originally denote respectively "the bulging part of the earth [*ditu* 地突]" and "chariot," (*Shuowen Jiezi*, chaps. 13B & 14A) but later jointly signify "Heaven and Earth." One of the earliest appearance of the combination of the two characters in this sense seems to be in the *Huainan Zi* (vol. 3:

It is not at all surprising to find some *fengshui* proponents of later times claiming great antiquity for its ideas, especially by aligning them with the records of building activities in the early Zhou times contained in the Confucian Classics, such as the *Shi Jing*, *Shang Shu* and *Zhou Li*. (See, e.g., *Guanshi Dili Zhimeng*, vol. 1) Yet hard as the proponents of the early arising of *fengshui* tried to induce vindication from these didactic sources, they would surely have had to admit, as did Bu Yingtian 卜應天 of the Tang and Meng Hao 孟浩 of the early Qing, (*Xuexin Fu*, vol. 1 with Meng's commentary) that what they had was only fragmentary records of the ancients' surveying and divining of building sites, not discourses of anything that can be labelled as *fengshui*, *kanyu* or *dili*, not to mention that precisely the same didactic sources were equally used as evidence by those who viguorously argued against *fengshui* ideas. (See a number of exemplary works reserved in GJT, vol. 476) This point is important in the context of our discussion - the site of Suzhou was probably chosen initially for geomantic considerations, and the city was built on a set of cosmological symbols, but these are consequently not to be interpreted in *fengshui* terms, even though one may find certain reference made by later *fengshui* promulgators to those events as a source of authority.[427]

By emphasising the conception of *qi* 氣 (lit. "cosmic breath") as the core of *fengshui* theories, Needham (1956:359) succinctly explains their principle and practice in general terms:

"Tianwen Xun") where it indicates the order of Heaven and Earth. Later, Xu Shen 許慎 explains explicitly that "*kan* means the *dao* of Heaven; *yu* means the *dao* of Earth," (Cf. Yan Shigu's commentary on the bibliographical entry, *Kanyu Jingui* 堪輿金匱 in the *Han Shu*, vol. 30: "Yiwen Zhi," no. 10, and Li Shan's commentary on Yang Xiong's 揚雄 *Ganquan Fu* 甘泉賦 in the *Wen Xuan*, vol. 7) while Zhang Yan 張晏 of the Three Kingdoms period defines *kanyu* as "the general name for Heaven and Earth." (Cf. Yan Shigu's commentary on *Han Shu*, vol. 87A: "Yang Xiong Zhuan," no. 57A and Li Shan's commentary, ibid.) The Kanyu discipline was also association with the *xingye* 星野 (lit. "stars/planets and field") system. We understand that *xingye* is undoubtedly a system of great antiquity, the principal idea of which is the correspondence between the spatial sections of the heavens (*fenxing* 分星) and the spatial divisions of the earthly field (*fenye* 分野), and between the movement of the heavenly bodies in one celestial section and the vicissitudes in the corresponding terrestrial division; and that, based on such correspondence, auspicious or inauspicious signs in the world of man can be interpreted. (Cf. *Huainan Zi*, vol. 3: "Tianwen Xun;" *Zhou Li*, "Chunguan Zongbo," vol. 26: "Baozhangshi" with Zheng's commentary. Similar accounts can also be found in *Lüshi Chunqiu*, *Zuo Zhuan* and *Guo Yu*) Zheng mentions a long lost book which was titled with the very term *kanyu* and contained in it an advocacy of the notion of the so-called Twelve *Ci* 次 (the twelve sections of the heavens along the zodiac) that corresponded to the earthly states in the late Zhou period.

427 See, e.g., *Zang Jing Yi*: "Nanjie Ershisi Pian," no. 21.

> If houses of the living and tombs of the dead were not properly adjusted, evil effects of most serious character would injure the inhabitants of the houses and the descendants of those whose bodies lay in the tombs, while conversely good siting would favour their wealth, health and happiness. Every place had its special topographical features which modified the local influence (*hsing shih* [i.e. *xingshi* 形勢]) of the various *chhi* [i.e. *qi* 氣] of Nature. The forms of hills and the directions of watercourses, being the outcome of the moulding influences of wind and waters, were the most important, but, in addition, the heights and forms of buildings, and the directions of roads and bridges, were potent factors. The force and nature of the invisible currents would be from hour to hour modified by the positions of the heavenly bodies, so that their aspects as seen from the locality in question had to be considered. While the choosing of sites was of prime importance, bad siting was not irremediable, as ditches and tunnels could be dug, or other measures taken, to alter the *feng-shui* situation.

Here for whatever reasons, Needham does not draw distinctions between the two major schools which employed different sources of ideas and laid stress on different aspects of cosmological and topographical conditions. Elsewhere, (1962:242, 282) he has briefly mentioned this division. More attention is paid to such distinctions by Feuchtwang (1974:17-8) and March (1968:261).

Considering the complexity of *fengshui* elaboration and practice,[428] and the limited purview of this thesis, I shall only quote two passages by the late Yuan and early Ming writer Wang Yi 王禕 (1322-1373) who summarises the distinctive principles of the two schools in his *Qingyan Conglu* 青巖叢錄:

> In later times those who advocated the art of *dili* divided into two schools. One is called the Zongmiao 宗廟 [lit. "Ancestral Temple"] method which began in Minzhong 閩中 [the central area of present-day Fujian]. Its origins go far back, but with Wang Ji of the Song it gained great currency. Its theory focuses on the Planets and the Trigrams [*xinggua* 星卦], and on the *yang* positions [*shan* 山] and directions [*xiang* 向], and the *yin* positions and directions, so that they are not at odds. By means of exclusive reliance on the Five Planets [*wuxing* 五星][429] and the Eight Trigrams [*bagua* 八卦], the order of production and conquest is determined. Its doctrine is circulating in Zhejiang, but those who presently employ it are very few.

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428 For details of *fengshui* theories, see Feuchtwang 1974. Cf. March 1968:253-67 and Freedman 1971:118-54; 1979a; 1979b.

429 The Five Planets correspond to the Five Elements and all their correlates. This correspondence is depicted in the *Shi Ji* (vol. 27: "Tianguan Shu," no. 5) as associated with that between Heaven and Earth: "In the sky there are the Five Planets, on earth there are the Five Elements. Thus in the sky there are arrays of stars and planets, and on earth there are divided territories."

> [The other] one is called the Jiangxi 江西 method, starting with Yang Yunsong and Zeng Wenchan, and especially refined by Lai Dayou and Xie Ziyi. Its theory focuses on landforms and terrains [*xingshi* 形勢],[430] and on tracing back where they arise and pursuing where they stop so as to determine position and direction. Special attention is paid to the co-ordinations of the *long* 龍 [lit. "dragon"], *xue* 穴 [lit. "cave" or "hollow"], *sha* 砂 [lit. "sand"] and *shui* 水 [lit. "water"],[431] whereas other limitations and refrainments are not considered at all. Its doctrine is current nowadays, and both the south and the north of the River [Yangzi], everyone follows it.

The Former, more often known as the Liqi 理氣 (lit. "principles and cosmic breath") school, emphasised cosmology, and attached much importance to the compass which is regarded by Feuchtwang (1974:96) as "the most complete and comprehensive single body of feng-shui symbols." The latter, on the other hand, emphasised the forms of the landscape, which is overtly signified by its more frequently used name, the Xingshi 形勢 (lit. "landforms and dynamic terrains") school.[432] The former is called respectively by Feuchtwang and by March

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430 The term *xingshi* may, in some other contexts, also be interpreted as "topographical forms and influences" or "the power/significance of circumstances."

431 The *long*, also known as the *longmai* 龍脈 (lit. "dragon vein"), appears to be a figurative term denoting mountain ranges characteristic of both continuous and directional display. In the *Guanshi Dili Zhimeng*, (vol. 1: "Xiangwu," no. 10) we read that "identifying mountains as dragons is to symbolise the rising and falling features in their form and influence" and that "the whole body of a dragon is taken as a metaphor of the living forms of mountains." (Cf. *Xuexin Fu*, vol. 1 with Meng's commentary) The conception of the continuous and directional attribute of mountain ranges through which the cosmic breath circulates was probably associated with the idea presented by the passage in the *Guan Zi* (chap. 39: "Shuidi") about the *qi* of the earth flowing in vessels comparable with those in the body of man and animals. Needham (1956:42 note d) suggests that, if this passage is not a later interpolation, it must be one of the earliest statements of the theory underlying *fengshui*. The *xue* indicated the exact spot where a settlement or a tomb should be located, for it is here that the influences of the mountains and waters merge, the *yin* and *yang* forces harmoniously converge, and the "affections" (*qing* 情) of Nature are concentrated and nurtured. (*Zangjing Yi*, chap. 2: "Chaxing") Two extended meanings of the term *xue* are informative as to its *fengshui* connotation. One is the impulse point, or *foramen*, of a human body, on which acupuncture can be practised; the other is the point of origin and return. (CH 1980:1791) The *sha* denoted the setting of a site, i.e. the overall layout of the hills and mountains surrounding the prospective settlement. The *shui* meant all kinds of bodies of waters - springs, streams, ponds, rivers, lakes, etc. - and was regarded by *fengshui* specialists as the blood veins of the "dragons," running through their bones (i.e. rocks or stones), flesh (i.e. earth and soil), skin (i.e. grass and straws) and hair (i.e. trees). (See, e.g., *Qingnang Haijiao Jing*, IV: "Shuifa")

432 Feuchtwang also divides the *fengshui* of the dwellings for the living (*yangzhai* 陽宅) and *fengshui* of the dwellings for the dead (*yinzhai* 陰宅). March (1968:261) suggests that these two principal schools emerged after Guo Pu. But it is not impossible that they, representing the two major trends of *fengshui* from the Tang period onward, derived from the two factions of geomancy that already existed in Han times; namely the Kanyu 堪輿 (lit. "Heaven and Earth") and the Xingfa 形法 (lit. "methods of configuration"). The Kanyu

"Cosmology" and "Directions;" the latter, "Earthly Forms" and "Shapes." In the eyes of March, (1968:263)

> The emphasis on direct experience - the immediate response to the whole feeling of a place - belongs especially to the Shapes school, which seems to have been the more esthetic, prestigious, and orthodox. The Directions school may be more magical and superstitious but at the same time, relying less on subjective experience and more on the indications of the compass, it is more proto-scientific in the Western sense: the principles may be occult, but the application could be more nearly uniform and objective. Directions, I suspect, could recommend more places than met the exacting requirements of Shapes, and hence may have been more practical for ordinary poor people.

It should be recognised here that each of the two schools had, especially in later times, absorbed some ingredients from the other. It is beyond any doubt, however, that the two schools are distinct from, and sometimes in fierce opposition to, each other.[433] It is also worth noting that there were also numerous ideas and beliefs which could be categorised under the title of *fengshui* but were apparently not in accord with either of the two schools. On this phenomenon, Feuchtwang (1974:171) writes:

> The great bulk of evidence of these random symbols is in records, not in [*fengshui*] manuals. From this we may deduce that their inclusion in feng-shui interpretations is on a quite different plan from those symbols which form the discourse of the manuals. With the former we are at the most inexpert and popular level of

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specialists presumably paid more attention to the relation, or correspondence, between the phenomena in the heavens and aspects of the earth, which was symbolised in the systems of Yinyang, the Five Elements, the symbols of the *Yi Jing*, etc., whereas experts of the Xingfa faction seem, according to Ban Gu 班固 (A.D. 32-92), to have been interested principally in topographical conditions, especially the form, scale and position of mountains, hills, waters and valleys, for the sake of site-choosing and the building of cities or houses. (*Han Shu,* vol. 30: "Yiwen Zhi," no. 10) It should also be noted that, in many cases of *fengshui* practice and, more often, interpretation, we find that it is difficult to draw a clear line even between the Xingshi and the Liqi applications, and that specific situations were sometimes dealt with in the light of both approaches.

433 The attitude of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) towards the *fengshui* applications of his times to some extent exemplifies the conflicting relation between the two schools. Wright (1977:55) has stated that Zhu Xi "was a particular enthusiast of *feng-shui*," but that he was seemingly enthusiastic only about the theory and practice of the Xingshi school, while he vigorously denounced those of the Liqi school. Obstinate refusal of the latter is also found in the "Dishu Zhengxie Bian 地書正邪辯" section of the *Bianlun Sanshipian* written by Meng Hao, incorporated in his *Xuexin Fu Zhengjie* produced around 1680, where he branded all discourses of the Liqi school as "heresies;" its principle is useful, as Meng implies in another section, "Luantou Tianxing Liqi Bian 巒頭天星理氣辯," of his work, only if it is to be seen and treated, not as a set of ideas separated from that of the Xingshi, but as an inferior part of the Xingshi theory.

> interpretation. Anything the physical environment suggests to you may become significant in the light of appropriate circumstances. The suggestion itself is indeed probably first evoked by those circumstances. . . . On the other hand, the specifically feng-shui symbols . . . occur in any circumstances. Unlike the extraneous symbols, they exist before the specific case. Each case must be interpreted according to at least their crudest principles . . . whereas the case itself suggests the extraneous symbols.

Fengshui interpretations of the city of Suzhou in the late imperial period, as we will see later in sections 7.3 and 7.5, are characteristic of a *mélange* of symbols of these two kinds.

7.2 *FENGSHUI* ADVICE ON URBAN CONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF SUZHOU

Whereas the great bulk of evidence of the *fengshui* of the city of Suzhou is of retrospective nature, there occurred in the Southern Song an important event of active *fengshui* advice on the city construction, or, more precisely, on whether two particular city gates which had been blocked up should be reopened. This event is recorded by Fan Chengda in his *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 3: "Chengguo"); and the central personage involved in it was Hu Shunshen 胡舜申 (*c.* 1081-?) who migrated from Jixi 績溪 in present-day Anhui 安徽 to Suzhou in the first half of the twelfth century. There is no doubt that Hu figured in the *fengshui* field: according to Fan Chengda, the book entitled *Jiangxi Dili Xinfa* 江西地理新法 (lit. "the new method of the Jiangxi Dili [school]")[434] and current in the Southern Song was from his hand; and his deeds are included in the biographies of famous *fengshui* specialists in the "Kanyu" section of the *Gujin Tushu Jicheng*. (476/58) After surveying the four sides of the city walls, Hu Shunshen wrote an essay between 1144 and 1164,[435] entitled *Wumen Zhonggao* 吳門忠告 (lit. "sincere advice on the city gates of Suzhou"), arguing that both Xu 胥 Gate and, more importantly, She 蛇 Gate should not be obstructed.

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434 Note that this title reads as if Hu Shunshen followed the Jiangxi method, i.e. the doctrine of the Xingshi school. (See section 7.1 above) Yet the terminology and theories he employs in his arguments about the city of Suzhou betray the fact that he principally espoused the doctrine of the Liqi school, or at the most, a combination of the two. This is probably what the words "new method" in the title of the book means.

435 Hu mentions the newly constructed Gusu Guesthouse which was built in 1144, and thus the essay must have been written in or after that year; and since in 1164, the prefect was considering Hu's ideas as presented in the essay, it must have been finished and circulated by that time. (Cf. *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 3: "Chengguo" and vol. 7: "Guanyu")

As has been discussed in section 4.5, She Gate remained in use as one of the eight gates of the city probably until the turn of the first millennium when it was abandoned along with another gate; Xu Gate continued to exist in the early Northern Song, but by 1084 when Zhu Changwen wrote his *Wujun Tujing Xuji*, it too had been blocked up. Without going into the technical details of Hu's exposition, I summarise his points as follows. Hu starts his argument with Mt. Yang 陽,[436] located about thirty *li* to the north-west of the city, which, because of its unmatched height in the Suzhou region, was regarded as supreme among all the nearby mountains, they being simply its offshoots stretching southward. Thus, for Hu Shunshen, the city of Suzhou took Mt. Yang as its primary mountain by the fact of its being located on the vast plain spreading from the foot of the mountain. This assertion wins support, as he sees it, from the fact that the land within the city walls was characterised by having its greatest altitude in the north-west, which was in accord with the location of the mountain in relation to the position of the city. Since the north-west position corresponded with that of the most noble celestial body, known as the Purple Forbidden Enclosure (*ziweiyuan* 紫微垣),[437] this particular topographical situation endowed this area with high geomantic qualities. The site of the city, Hu also argues, is located where the topographical influences (*shi* 勢) converge and the topographical forms (*xing* 形) stop and coalesce, and is thus the place in which the immense cosmic breath concentrates (*quanqi zhi di* 全氣之地). Figure 7-1 is a diagrammatic map of the site of the city in relation to Mt. Yang and other nearby major mountains.

The situation of the local waters, Hu Shunshen continues to argue, should be in correspondence with that of the mountains. Although the general pattern of rivers around the city conformed with the *fengshui* principles, there existed serious defects. The stream water coming from the true west represented prosperity, previously flowing into the city through Xu Gate; and the stream water from the south-east represented life, previously flowing into the city through She Gate. The waters of life and prosperity were most crucial for the benefit of the city, "just like the blood and breath (*yingwei* 營衛) of a human body." Yet it was precisely these two gates that were blocked by Hu's time, and the grave consequences of this

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436 According to Gu Yuanqing 顧元慶, a Ming scholar from Changzhou county, Mt. Yang was regarded as the primary mountain (*zhen* 鎮) of Suzhou. In relation to the position of the city, the mountain faces the *yang* direction (i.e. south-east) and that was how it gained its name. (*Gusu Zhi*, vol. 8: "Shan," A. Cf. "Preface" of the *Yangshan Xinlu* 陽山新錄, quoted in the *Suzhoufu Zhi*, vol. 7: "Shan," no. 2)

437 See sections 2.4.1 and 2.5.1 for an explanation of this celestial body and its cosmological meanings.

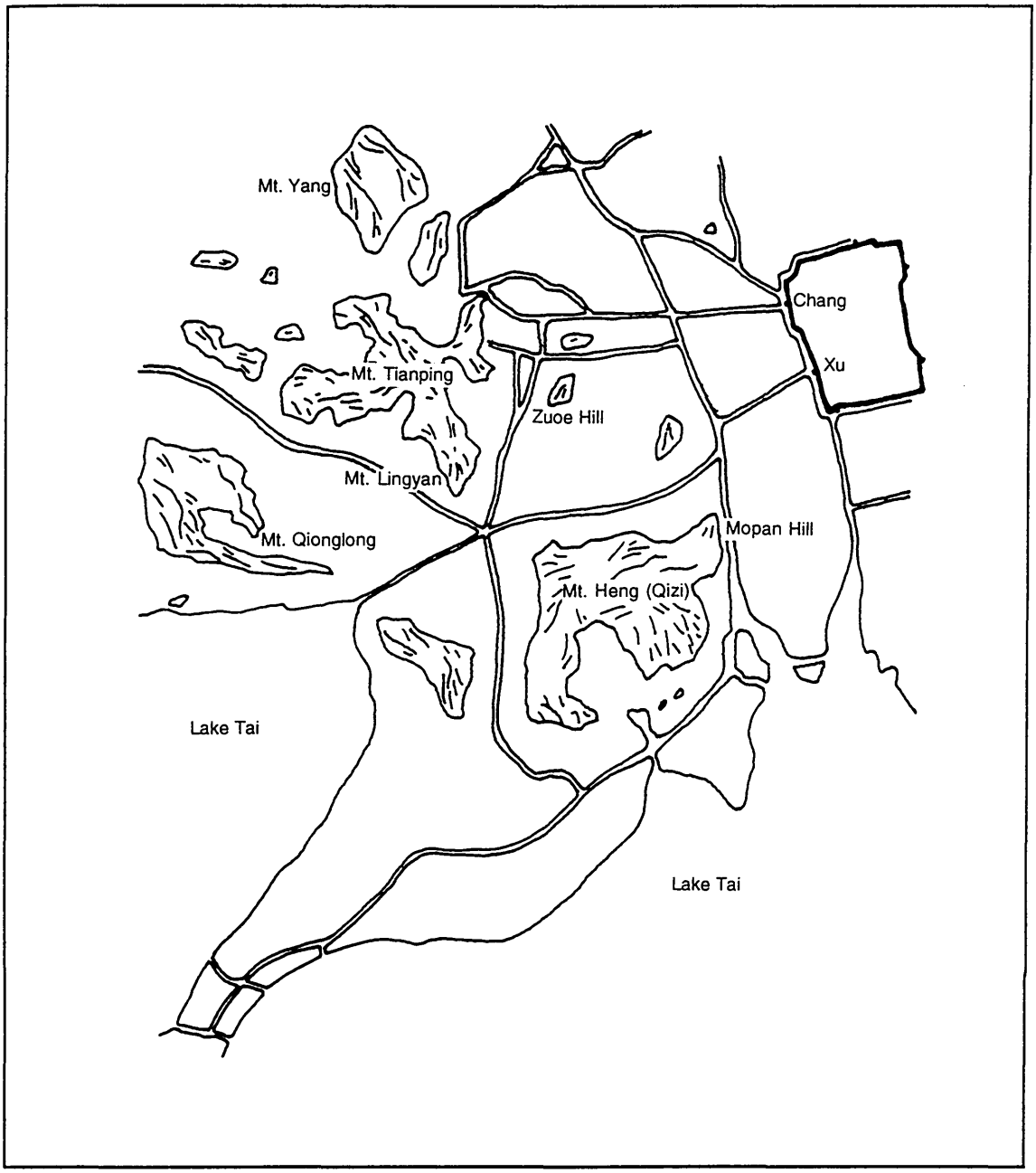

Figure 7-1 Diagrammatic map of the site of the city of Suzhou in relation to Mt. Yang and other nearby major mountains. Based on *Suzhoufu Zhi*: "Wuxian Tu" and "Changzhou Yuanhe Liangxian Tu."

were evident for him in the desolation of the city and, especially, in the devastation that the Jurchen cavalry inflicted upon Suzhou in 1130.[438] Of these two gates, She Gate, he felt, was the one in particular that should not be obstructed, because that would deprive the city of its vitality. Hu Shunshen then goes on to mention two historic periods in support of this point. At the time of Helü Dacheng, the south-east gate, i.e. She Gate, was deliberately closed to signal Wu's resolution to eradicate the state of Yue;[439] consequently, life breaths were cut off and Wu was eventually conquered and subjugated by Yue. In contrast to this severe affliction on the city was its strength and prosperity during the Jin and Tang periods, when all the eight gates - including She Gate - remained in use. Thus, if She Gate were to be reopened, Hu Shunshen concludes, the limpid, refined breaths from the south-east would flow into the city, and its misfortune throughout the recent years would be altered.

The main concern of our discussion is not whether this *fengshui* argument sounds cogent either to the traditional Chinese or to us; rather, it lies in what this specific event tells us about the role that *fengshui* ideas and practice played in the construction of the city. Let us first examine what Fan Chengda thought of it. Fan insists that Hu Shunshen surveyed the city walls "at leisure." It is indeed possible that Hu had some other occupations, and thus only used his spare time for this *fengshui* activity, for, as Feuchtwang (1974:176) suggests, geomancy was at large not considered a profession. Yet it is equally possible that Hu was a fully devoted *fengshui* specialist[440] and therefore actually did not take this matter leisurely. In this latter case, then, Fan Chengda's statement probably reflects his own view on the position of *fengshui* in the daily life of a man of letters; that is, that *fengshui* was no more than a "spare-time" matter.[441] There is no doubt that Fan Chengda was sympathetic towards Hu's argument; otherwise he would not have incorporated the entire essay in his work. Yet at the same time he obviously kept his distance from it

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438 See section 4.2 for the details of this event.

439 Note that both the *Wudi Ji* and *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. A: "Men Ming") record that it was the gates on the east side of the city, not the south-east one, that were closed as a gesture of hostility. Hu Shunshen obviously alters this information to illustrate his point.

440 Since Hu Shunshen wrote, as we know it, nothing but an acclaimed *fengshui* discourse and the Advice on the city gates of Suzhou, it seems unlikely that he was just a humble *fengshui* practitioner who had to use his spare time to carry out the survey. Although *fengshui* may not have been Hu's professional livelihood, the fact that he went to the effort of choosing a geomantically appropriate day suggests that he took the surveying of the city-walls very seriously.

441 We will see later in section 7.4 a similar view expressed six hundred years later by Wei Guangfu 韋光黻 (*c.* 1789-1853) in his remark on the current attribution of some *fengshui* works to Liu Ji 劉基 (1311-1375).

- he does not overtly express his own opinion about the affair, but records Hu's regret at the eventual failure of the materialisation of his ideas: "So rarely did opportunities and human efforts coincide!" Thus the question is which part of the argument really attracted him. I would suggest that Fan's interest lay less in the *fengshui* exposition of the current situation of the city,[442] than in the possible restoration of all the eight city gates that were recorded to have been built at the inception of the city's existence, and which were open in the Jin and Tang periods - one of the glorious features of the city in the past, which had been kept alive in numerous works of eulogistic poetry and prose.

Now we turn to Hu Shunshen's argument itself. It is important to note that Hu's advice was not given at the request of the local government, nor in fact at the request of any individual officials. He saw the shortcomings of the city in *fengshui* terms; but all that he could do was to write about them, hoping that some officials might one day pay some attention to what he had to say. This is explicitly revealed in his essay: "Those who understand *yinyang* and *fengshui* often sigh at these defects." Hu Shunshen's advice is carefully worded indeed, which is reflected in two passages of his essay. The first concerns whether Xu Gate should be reopened. We understand that, in 1144, the prefect Wang Huan 王喚 built the Gusu Guesthouse by this gate which had been disused for about half a century; probably within one or two years, he built on top of the gate the Gusu Platform as part of the guesthouse. (See section 4.5) As a state guesthouse, it was, in the mind of Fan Chengda, "unsurpassed in grandeur throughout the whole south-east region." State guests were accommodated here on their way to the imperial capital Lin'an. Hu Shunshen was aware of the importance of this establishment; he argued that it would have been beneficial if Xu Gate had not been blocked, but immediately acknowledged that the newly constructed guesthouse which stood in the way of the gate was so imposing that it should not be moved. He absolved this uncompromising situation from his *fengshui* requirements by evading the question whether this west gate *should* be reopened. Instead, he tactfully writes:

> Also, the water [that would have run through Xu Gate] merely represents wealth. The water through She Gate . . . represents matters concerning writing and officialdom. In principle this gate is more important and should thus be reopened.

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442 We should note that Fan also incorporates in his *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 38: "Xianji") an essay by someone else criticising the choice of the site of the county seat of Kunshan made by "yielding to the *fengshui* situation of Mt. Ma'an." (See section 7.4 below)

The equation of "life" carried by water from the south-east with "scholarship and imperial office" shifts the scale of the balance of his argument to the side of She Gate. In morality, it conforms with the Confucian ideology; in practice, any offence to the local government is avoided.

The other passage reflecting Hu's caution in putting forward his suggestions is about the advantages and disadvantages of reopening She Gate:

> Nowadays, there are only five gates in use, the other [three] having all been blocked up. The one that should definitely be unobstructed is this unique She Gate. Investigating why it was blocked up, [we find that] the *Tujing*'s[443] explanation is that diverse roads converge to it and consequently defence and inspection are difficult to implement here. Alas! This is the least of considerations. Presently, since his Majesty temporarily resides in Qiantang 錢塘 [i.e. Lin'an],[444] the city of Suzhou should in particular open its south-east gate, so as to uphold the righteousness of Facing and Protecting [*chaogong zhi yi* 朝拱之義] [the Emperor].[445]

This line of argument apparently aims at appealing to the imperial scholar-officials for their approval, since it reads as though Hu is concerned not only with the improvement of the fortune of the city, but, more importantly, with the fulfilment of the duty of imperial servants.

Yet in spite of all his efforts, the result was not as Hu Shunshen would have preferred. In 1164, a Zhenzhou 真州 (present-day Yizheng 儀征 in Jiangsu) scholar-official, Shen Du 沈度, was appointed prefect of Suzhou. According to Fan Chengda, Shen was previously Hu Shunshen's colleague, and, when he learned of Hu's exposition, had much sympathy with it. In the following year, after some locals made a petition to the prefectural authority for it, Shen had his subordinates survey the position of the old She Gate and decided to reopen it in the twelfth month. As everything was ready, those who objected this idea came forward to argue that the

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443 *Xiangfu Tujing* 祥符圖經, written by Li Zong'e 李宗諤 in the 1010s but which has long been lost.

444 The city of Hangzhou (named Lin'an in the Southern Song) was designated euphemistically as a temporary capital (*xingzai* 行在) in 1138 by the battered remnants of the Song court after the Jurchen conquest of the North China Plain.

445 The Southern Song capital is located to the south-east of the city of Suzhou. Because of the awkward topographical conditions of Hangzhou, the *de facto* Principal Gate of the imperial palace was located in the north, which was at odds with the canonical principle of imperial city planning that the palace city should face south, as did the Son of Heaven. For the conception of *chaogong*, cf. section 4.5 where we have discussed a similar phrase inscribed on Qi Gate.

project would cause undue trouble to the populace (*raomin* 擾民). "To avoid calumnies," Fan Chengda states, "[Shen] Du rescinded this project." Exactly ten years later, the prefect Han Yangu 韓彥古 was also in favour of the idea of reopening She Gate. He chose in advance an auspicious day for the construction, but left office one month before he could start it. In the following century, two other prefects (in the mid-1250s and the late 1260s) who were somewhat interested in this enterprise are mentioned in the *Suzhoufu Zhi* compiled in the late fourteenth century by Lu Xiong. But no real attempts were made by them or anyone.[446] (See quotations in SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai")

It is clear that, because of the governmental guesthouse standing in the way of Xu Gate, reopening it was regarded as entirely out of the question - even Hu Shunshen must have known it, notwithstanding his fervent reasoning that the obstruction of this gate effectively cut off the stream of prosperity which would otherwise flow into the city. This seemed to leave as the only option open that of whether She Gate was to be reopened. For Hu Shunshen, the fact that his idea of reopening She Gate never materialised may have indicated "the non-coincidence of opportunities and human efforts;" if the prefect Shen Du had not been afraid of criticism, or if the prefect Han Yangu had remained in office for two more months, the gate would, so Hu may have thought, have been re-established in the light of his exposition. From a historian's point of view, however, the failure in the realisation of this *fengshui* idea manifests something more than a simple missing of "opportunity," for one could well argue that the social and ideological milieu of the governing body of the prefecture of which the city was a node and symbol, hardly produced the conditions which would bring this *fengshui* idea to physical realisation in the city construction, even though the sporadic events mentioned in the preceding paragraph may have looked as if things were turning Hu Shunshen's way.

There is no doubt that, among the prefects of Suzhou through the ages, Shen and Han were in the minority in being interested in this *fengshui* proposal: within the period of eleven years from Shen's tenure of prefectural office to Han's dismissal, for example, there were twelve scholar-officials in total appointed to the post. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 11: "Timing") It is hardly surprising that throughout the subsequent history of Suzhou, only two prefects are recorded as having paid any attention to this matter. The point is even better illustrated by the series of actions

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446 It is interesting to note that the event in the mid-1250s was started by a petition from a few wealthy sojourners (*yugong* 寓公), rather than by the natives.

taken by Shen Du in association with the proposal, which is recorded in more detail by Fan Chengda. This prefect was sympathetic towards the idea partly because, as Fan Chengda emphasises, he had once worked together with Hu Shunshen; that is, their personal rapport increased the chance of the prefect's making a decision in favour of Hu's opinion.[447] Yet Shen was cautious enough not to show publicly any inclination to pursue the scheme until the spring of the following year when a petition for it was made to him. Once opposition to the scheme emerged, he immediately revoked the planned project. What seems more informative is the accusation of "causing trouble to the populace" brought forward against the project. Freedman, (1979b:328) dealing with the application of *fengshui* ideas to the residences of the living and the dead, writes:

> People intent on securing the good fortune of their families or communities can take steps by retaining the services of a geomancer in connection with the siting of their tombs or buildings. Indeed, we may say that, in the traditional Chinese setting, there is more involved than a mere desire to procure good fortune; there is a moral obligation to seek a future of happiness for those for whom one is responsible.

In the case of construction work in the prefectural city, it was certainly the prefect who was responsible for the welfare of the people of the prefecture, and whose moral obligation was to seek a future of happiness for them. However, I will argue extensively in section 7.4 below that both the prefect's personal, though not untypical, stance with regard to *fengshui*, and the social and ideological context of the local government based on the city hardly made the desire to bring about good fortune by means of *fengshui* a morally sound one.

Like so many other prefects of Suzhou in history, Shen might have felt no qualms about pursuing reconstruction of the city walls, restoration of gate towers, dredging of city canals, and the building of other structures of the city. On such occasions, he may have shown much consideration for the populace by taking certain measures to limit the distress that the construction works might have inflicted on them, in the hope of then being praised for his righteous, humane ways of performing his governmental duties by his fellow officials and, more importantly, by later historians. This kind of deed was indeed regarded as one of the most

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447 Unfortunately, we are not certain whether this was one of the actual reasons for Shen's willingness to adopt Hu's proposal, or an excuse made for him by Fan Chengda who perhaps believed that Shen's judgement should not easily have been influenced by *fengshui* ideas unless some intimate social connection had been involved.

commendable and is frequently recorded in the local gazetteers of Suzhou. But none of such deeds have bearings on *fengshui.* By contrast with these, the charge of "causing trouble to the populace" raised against the scheme of reopening She Gate in the light of *fengshui* ideas was so serious to the prefect that he had to cancel it outright. It was not the scale of the construction, but its association with *fengshui*, that rendered the charge inexorable. No other measures seem to have been considered as adequate either to reverse the prospective accusation against him or to mitigate the immediate distress to the populace, even though *fengshui* was understood by everyone who thought of it as producing long-term beneficial effects.[448]

7.3 *FENGSHUI* INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CITY OF SUZHOU

Fan Chengda's description of the events in the mid-twelfth century and the mid-thirteenth century, centred upon Hu Shunshen's argument concerning the geomantic situation of the city gates of Suzhou, is, to the best of my knowledge, the first written record of the city in history in explicit association with *fengshui* ideas. From then on, particularly during the late imperial period, more accounts of the site and form of the city in the light of *fengshui* appeared scatteredly both in the prefectural gazetteers and, particularly, in the casual writings of the local scholars. Yet unlike the first instance which is of active (but vain) *fengshui* advice on city construction, seeking to change the fortune of the city and the prefecture, the accounts of later times are all characterised by retrospective interpretation of the city with miscellaneous *fengshui* ideas and symbols. Since many of these random symbols are basically found, not in *fengshui* manuals, but in local records, we appear with them to be at what Feuchtwang (1974:171) calls "the most inexpert and popular level of interpretation." Moreover, by combing all the relevant local documents produced from the Yuan period onwards which are presently at my disposal, I find that recorded *fengshui* accounts of the city, though very limited in number, range from its grand geographical conditions down all the way to the individual structures in and around the city, and that these written sources are so scattered and diverse in nature that their ideas do not form a self-consistent system

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448 Freedman (1979b:330) reminds us that, from our point of view, there is no objective test of a geomancer's success in his craft. "*Feng-shui* works on a long time-scale; nobody expects quick results, although they are very pleased to have them, and everybody is prepared to put down to a geomancer's credit the happy consequences that follow many years after his labours."

as a whole. Because of this, I concentrate in this section only on three major examples of *fengshui* interpretations of the city, regarding respectively its topographical conditions, the overall city form, and the conformation of city space. Attention is paid not so much to the *fengshui* notions themselves as reflected in these interpretations as to the way they entered and were treated in the elite circle.

7.3.1 Topographical Conditions

Apart from Hu Shunshen's work, no monographs on the *fengshui* conditions of the setting of the city of Suzhou are available to us, but it is most probable that written works of this kind were in circulation during the late imperial period. In Wang Ao's (1450-1524) time, for example, *fengshui* expositions of the topographical conditions of Suzhou had developed sufficiently for him to draw upon in his description of the city's natural surroundings. The opening passage of the volumes entitled "Mountains" in his *Gusu Zhi*, (vol. 8: "Shan," A) a gazetteer of Suzhou compiled in 1506, reads:

> The mountains in the Suzhou area are fascinatingly beautiful; and the fine qualities of the South-east are all concentrated here. The specialists in *dili* 地理 [lit. "texture of the earth"] say that they originate from Mt. Tianmu 天目 and sprout from Mt. Yang 陽. From Mt. Yang [the mountain range] splits into Mt. Hua 華 and Mt. Lu 鹿, tortuously via Mt. Tianping 天平, and terminates at Mt. Lingyan 靈巖; another branch grows from Mt. Qionglong 穹窿 and then turns eastward, terminating at Mt. Lengjia 楞伽 and the mountains in Lake [Tai].

This statement needs some comment. It is an explanation of the geographical situation of the mountains in the Suzhou region made in the light of part of the expositions by the specialists in *fengshui*. Such expositions apparently are closely associated with the theories of the Xingshi 形勢 (lit. "landforms and terrains") school which I have introduced in section 7.1 above.

Mountain ranges were denoted by the Xingshi school with the figurative term *long* 龍 (lit. "dragon"), or *longmai* 龍脈 (lit. "dragon vein"). The identification of the hierarchy of the *long* was made in association with the classification of rivers which were always perceived as flanking the *long* on both sides. Three great primary "dragons" or "stems" (*gan* 幹) in China and its contiguous regions were identified from the *fengshui* point of view, so that the geographical positions of the cities could be assessed and argued about: the three - north, middle and south - arterial mountain ranges were believed to have all originated from Mt. Kunlun 崑崙

in the North-west and to be demarcated by four major watercourses, namely, the River Yalu 鴨綠 in the North, the Yellow River and the River Yangzi in the Middle, and the South Sea in the South.[449] As Figure 7-2 shows, this perception has been diagrammatically depicted in the "Zhongguo Sanda Gantu" 中國三大幹圖 (lit. "a map of the three great stems in the Middle Kingdom") which is contained in the *Sancai Tuhui* (vol. 16) compiled in 1609 by Wang Qi 王圻 and his son Wang Siyi 王思義. The same perceptive and methodological principle was applied at every level of the hierarchical system of the "dragons;" that is, as March (1968:257) states, the main "dragons" were seen as dividing and subdividing into lower-order stems and branches (*zhi* 支), affecting progressively smaller areas and fewer people, and being less and less potent. Thus a settlement was supposed to be built at the place where the *qi* of the "dragons" concentrated, for it is here that the influences of the mountains and waters merge, the *yin* and *yang* forces harmoniously converge, and the "affections" (*qing* 情) of Nature are concentrated and nurtured. A place which held an immense quantity of *qi* was considered to be suitable for the establishment of a state, provincial or prefectural capital, while the place with meagre *qi* provided the site for a county capital, a market town or a village.

The mountain ranges in the Suzhou area are probably seen by the *fengshui* theorists as originating from Mt. Tianmu in the north-west of Zhejiang, which forms the major part of one of the prominent branches of the "south stem" (*nan gan* 南幹) or the "south dragon" (*nan long* 南龍), and from which the mountains in the entire Lower Yangzi region are believed to have arisen.[450] Mt. Yang is important to Suzhou in *fengshui* terms because, as we have seen in Hu Shunshen's elaboration discussed in the preceding section, it is from this mountain that all others in the region derive, as its offshoots. However, the "Mountains" section of Wang Ao's *Gusu Zhi*, like that of any other gazetteers, deals with the locations, names, natural features and cultural relics of these mountains, together with the historic events associated with them. It does not apply any specific *fengshui* terminology, such as *long* or *longmai*, to its account of the mountains; nor does it aim at assessing the *fengshui* situation of the city's natural setting. It simply borrows *fengshui*

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449 See, e.g., *Han Long Jing*; *Kanyu Manxing*; and *Guangyou Zhi*, vol. A: "Za Zhi," A: "Dimai."

450 Cf. *Guangyou Zhi*, vol. A: "Za Zhi," A: "Dimai;" *Sancai Tuhui*, vol. 16: "Zonglun Zhongguo zhi Shan." Wang Shixing 王士性 (1547-1598) explicitly states that "the San Wu 三吳 region is the tail of the 'south dragon,' and the *qi* 氣 of the dragon terminates as it enters the sea." (*Wuyue Youcao*, vol. 3: "Wu You," A: "Wu You Jixing") Apart from those in the Suzhou area, the mountains around Hangzhou and Huzhou, for example, are likewise traced by the *fengshui* theorists back to Mt. Tianmu. (*Kanyu Zazhu*, "Fuyan")

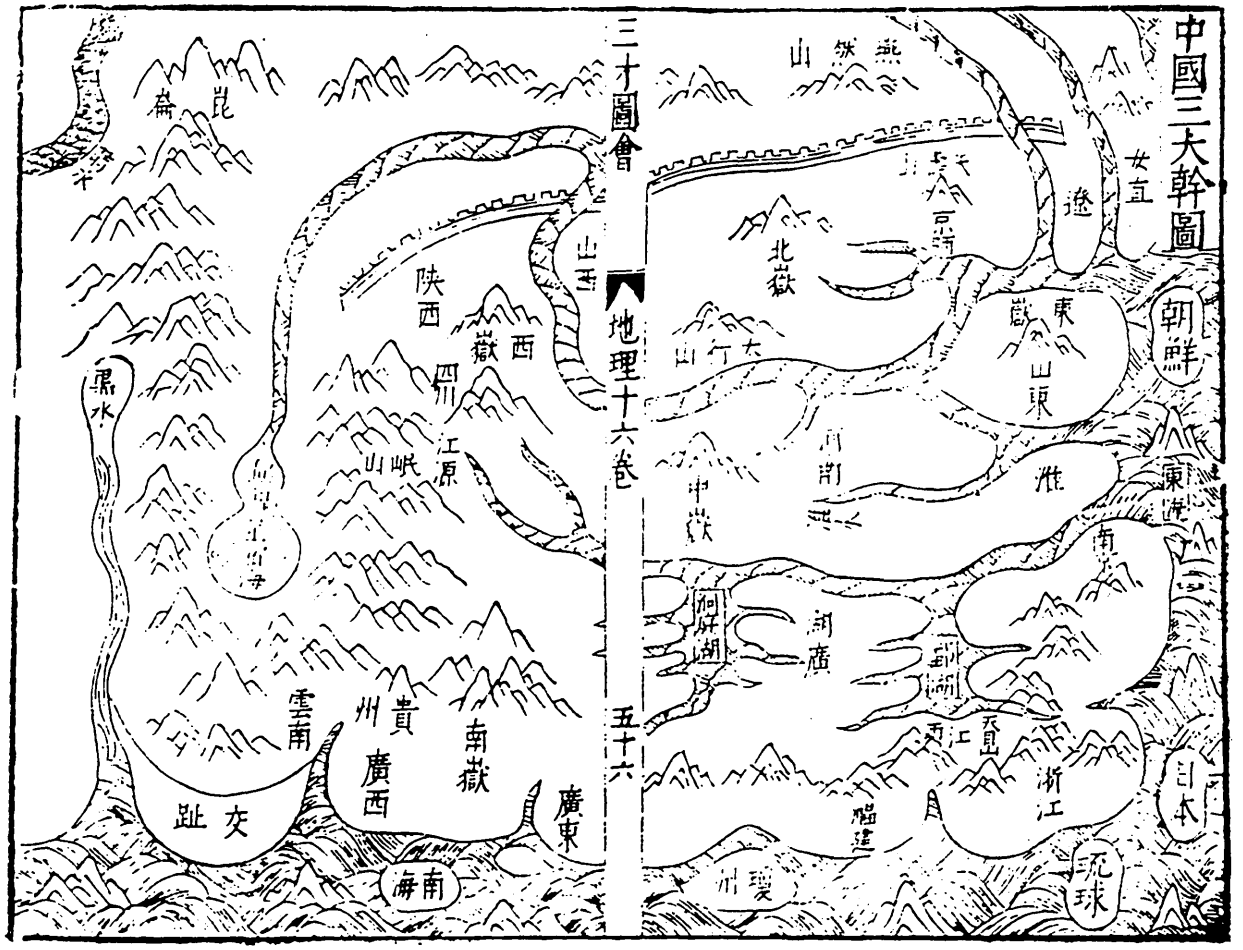

Figure 7-2 "Zhongguo San Dagan Tu" (lit. "map of the three great stems in the Middle Kingdom") contained in the *Sancai Tuhui*, vol. 16: "Dili."

explanation of the mountain ranges without paying any attention to matters regarding "fortune" (in the widest sense of the term) which is the central concern of any geomantic theories. In other words, unlike Hu Shunshen's *Wumen Zhonggao* which analyses and evaluates the *fengshui* situation of the city as determined by its surrounding topographical features (see section 7.2), the passage in Wang Ao's work only adopts the part of *fengshui* theories which appears to be close to what we know as geographical descriptions, but leaves out of it any value judgement on the appropriateness of these specific mountainous conditions and the geomantic fortunes they are supposed to carry for the city and the whole prefecture - the crucial part of *fengshui* as a form of divination.

Not only did the existence of *fengshui* ideas about Suzhou's mountains continue in the Qing period, but different versions may have been competing with each other. This is partly evidenced in Zhang Zilin's *Honglan Yisheng* (vol. 4: "Suozai"), a casual record of Suzhou written in 1822. Zhang's work contains a passage in which some contemporary *fengshui* interpretations are cited in a similar manner to, but in more detail than, Wang Ao's words quoted earlier above:

> Among all the mountains in the Suzhou region, Mt. Qinwang 秦望[451] is the primary one [*zhen* 鎮]. Within the area of one hundred *li*, the winds, clouds, thunder and rain all come from it. The mountain range develops southward from the west, including for instance Mt. Qionglong, Mt. Lengjia, Mt. Tianping and Mt. Hua, meandering and rising and falling like a roving dragon [*youlong* 游龍], and settles at Mopan 磨盤 Hill[452] to form the *xue* 穴 [lit. "cave" or "hollow"]. . . . The specialists in landforms [*xing jia* 形家] say that [the situation of] the city of Suzhou is determined by three dragon ranges [*longmai* 龍脈]. Generally speaking, the one in the north-west comes from Mt. Jiulong 九龍 and Mt. Hui 惠, the one in the south-west from Mt. Tianmu, Mt. Lang 狼 and Mt.

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451 There are two well-known mountains under this name. One is in the north of present-day Zhejiang, which is too far away from Suzhou to be considered relevant to our discussion. The other is located in the south-west of Jiangyin 江陰 county under the jurisdiction of Changzhou prefecture. Yet, about seventy kilometres away in the north-west from the city of Suzhou, it is much smaller in both height and depth than many of the mountains in the Suzhou region, and thus unlikely to be the one that Zhang Zilin talks about. Moreover, according to the *Suzhoufu Zhi*, (vol. 7: "Shan," no. 2: "Kunshanxian") there is still another small hill named Qinwang within the territory of Suzhou prefecture. It is located thirty *li* south of the city of Kunshan 崑山, a subordinate county of Suzhou situated to the east of the prefectural city. However, from the context of Zhang's description, we know that the mountain to which Zhang refers could not possibly be this one as well; instead, it is possible that what he means is Mt. Qinyuhang 秦餘杭, i.e. Mt. Yang standing to the north-west of the city. But we are as yet not at all certain about this.

452 Mopan Hill is the popular name for Chamo 茶磨 Hill located at the north-east edge of Mt. Lengjia.

Dongting 洞庭, and the one in the true north links with Mt. Yu 虞.
. . .

Although as in the case of the passage from the *Gusu Zhi*, no assessment of the geomantic conditions of Suzhou's mountains is made by Zhang Zilin, he is apparently more enthusiastic about the *fengshui* ideas than Wang Ao,[453] for he consistently uses some of the technical terms from *fengshui* vocabulary, such as *zhen*, *long*, *longmai* and *xue*.[454] Three interesting points can be made by reference to Wang and Zhang's passages. First, the ideas as to where Suzhou's mountains were generated are slightly different between the two versions. In the quotation from Wang Ao, the local mountain ranges are said to arise from Mt. Tianmu alone, whereas the version adopted by Zhang Zilin has it that they are formed by three "dragon ranges" coming from three different directions, only one of which does Mt. Tianmu represent. Thus it is very reasonable to suggest either that the *fengshui* interpretations of Suzhou's topographical situation may not have emerged from a single source, or that they had further developed during the second half of the late imperial period to such an extent that some of them became no longer entirely consistent with each other.

The second point centres on the *fengshui* term *xue*. The idea that the *xue* is formed at Mopan hill, as Zhang Zilin cites, possibly from some *fengshui* works current at his time, appears to be far from in conformity with a favourable geomantic situation. The *xue* was supposed to be the exact spot where the cosmic breaths of life were concentrated and thus the one where a settlement or a tomb should be located (see section 7.1). Yet as Figure 7-1 shows, the city is situated north-east of Mopan Hill, the south-westernmost of its walls being over four and a half kilometres away from this ideal spot. Although Zhang Zilin does not include in his citation any value judgement on this actual situation, the site of the city is hardly to be seen as preferable according to this particular *fengshui* interpretation.

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453 The information which we have about the two scholars is not sufficient for us to say whether their attitudes towards *fengshui* vary significantly. Likewise, we could not conclude with any certainty that their possibly different educational backgrounds and definitely different social status had contributed to their different views; nor are we sure whether it is the genres of their writings - one is a gazetteer, the other, a casual notebook - that determine the different tones of their wordings. Yet it is interesting to note that in the "Fanli" 凡例 (lit. "Guide [to the Use of the Book]"), Zhang claims: "Any unfounded statement is not recorded." Since his book contains not only the passage that I have just quoted, but also some others on the *fengshui* of burial and on the principal urban spatial pattern (which we will see in detail later on), geomantic matters must have been regarded by him as fairly legitimate and important. In contrast, on very few occasions is anything in connection with *fengshui* mentioned in the *Gusu Zhi*.

454 The last three terms, almost exclusively for *fengshui* use, have been explained in section 7.1. The first one will be discussed very soon below.

Here we are presented with a more conspicuous contradiction between different versions of *fengshui* ideas, as we recall Hu Shunshen argument that the site of the city is the place where the cosmic breaths concentrate, (see section 7.2 above) this allowing us to assume that he may have regarded it as the *xue*, even though he does not use this specific term.

The third point concerns the use of the character *zhen* and needs a few more words. The character, denoting "to weigh (or hold) down," has many derivative meanings. In our context, it is sufficient to mention just those of its connotations that seem relevant to its application to the description of mountains, namely "to stabilise" and "to pacify." One of the *fengshui* notions is that "among the mountains and valleys of a particular region, there must be one that is the highest and largest as its *zhen*, which is accordingly termed 'the ancestor mountain' [*zushan* 祖山];" (*Zang Jing Yi*: "Nanjie Ershisi Pian," no. 1; cf. chap. 6: "Fenlong") that is, the character *zhen* means the primary mountain when it is employed in the *fengshui* accounts of local topographical conditions. As the principal point of reference, it is believed to be able to "stabilise" and "pacify" the land of a given region. Yet unlike the other three *fengshui* terms that Zhang Zilin uses, *zhen* not only has an ancient root for its specific connotation "primary mountains," but, more importantly, finds its place in some of the Confucian Classics. The Han scholar Kong Anguo 孔安國, commenting on a sentence in the *Shang Shu*, (vol. 3: "Shun Dian," no.2) states: "The most famous and particularly large mountain of every region was taken as its *zhen*." This statement is entirely consistent with the passage in the *Zhou Li* ("Xiaguan Sima," no. 4, vol. 33: "Zhifang Shi") about the designation of the most important mountain in each of the nine regions as a *zhen*.[455] Thus it seems certain that the term was borrowed into the *fengshui* theories without any significant alteration of its meaning when it was applied to the descriptions of a region's mountains.

It is precisely in the use of *zhen* in its sense of the primary mountain that we are confronted with markedly conflicting opinions between imperial scholars and *fengshui* advocates. We have seen that, in *fengshui* terms, Mt. Yang was continuously regarded as the primary mountain, or *zhen*, of the Suzhou region. Yet those who produced the local gazetteers from the Northern Song onwards obviously held different views on it. Zhu Changwen, for instance, writes in his *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. B: "Shan") published in 1084:

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455 Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) explains in his commentary that "*zhen* are the famous mountains that help to maintain the unique property of the land."

> Mt. Tianping is . . . majestic and particularly lofty; surrounded by a group of other mountain peaks, it is the *zhen* of the prefecture. Its vegetation is graceful and verdant; it is lovely to observe.[456]

In the same volume, he also insists that Mt. Heng, to the east foot of which the city of Suzhou was temporarily "moved" around the turn of the seventh century, (see section 4.1) "pacifies" (*zhen*)[457] the south-west of this region, because, situated by Lake Tai in the west and controlling the Yue region in the south, it was the strategic point at the time of the conflict between the rival states of Wu and Yue. One and a half centuries later, Zhu Mu takes up both of the two ideas in his *Fangyu Shenglan* (vol. 2: "Pingjiangfu") written in 1240, whereas Fan Chengda pays great attention only to the former in his *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 15: "Shan" and vol. 39: "Zhongmu") published in 1229. All of the Suzhou gazetteers compiled during the Ming and Qing periods follow these ideas presented by local historians, rather than those from the *fengshui* interpretations. Lu Xiong in his early Ming *Suzhoufu Zhi* (quoted fin SPCK, vol. 5: "Chengwai": "Shan") goes even further, selecting Mt. Qionglong as yet another *zhen* of the prefecture, due to its magnificent height and depth.[458]

There is no doubt that the spiritual sense of the term *zhen*[459] is as strong in the historians' descriptions of the mountains as in the *fengshui* interpretations. But their perceptions never coincide. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy is, I would hypothesise, that the criteria for a mountain to be seen as the primary one in the Suzhou region are profoundly different in the minds of the local historians on

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456 This idea appeared even earlier, in one of Su Shunqin's 蘇舜欽 (1009-1048) poems, quoted by Fan Chengda in his *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 15: "Shan").

457 Here the term is used as a verb.

458 Fan Chengda sees Mt. Qionglong as the most notable for its height and depth, but he does not apply the term *zhen* to it. (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 15: "Shan")

459 The term in the similar spiritual sense is used in many other contexts. We are told, for example, that the treasured golden horizontal board (*jinbaopai* 金寶牌) in the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan, bestowed by Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (reigned 998-1022) of the Northern Song, was what would forever "pacify" the place; (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 31: "Gongguan") that the brick pagoda of the Buddhist temple on top of Mt. Lingyan, so lofty as to be able to support the canopy of Heaven, could "pacify" the land for a long time; (op. cit. vol. 32: "Guowai Si") that the old nether millstone and well in Mamopan 馬磨盤 Alley were "pacifying" the neighbourhood and thus should not be moved; (*Wumen Biaoyin*, vol. 7) and that the temple dedicated to the aquatic deities near Qilin 麒麟 Alley was built in the early Ming to "pacify" the evil dragons. (Op. cit. vol. 10) In these contexts, *zhen* is somewhat equivalent to the term *ya* 壓 or 厭 (lit. "to subdue [the evil forces]"), as we read in the *Wudi Ji*: "Pan Gate, . . . on it being carved wooden coiling dragons, pacified [*zhen*] this place and subdued [*ya*] Yue." (See section 2.5.3)

the one hand and *fengshui* advocates on the other. For the historians, a mountain that deserved to be called a *zhen* should not only be lofty but, more importantly, have the unsurpassed natural beauty that could inspire all the writers and poets who visited it to write about it. Mt. Tianping and, to a lesser degree, Mt. Qionglong, were two such mountains. As for Mt. Heng, *zhen* was applied to it because of its strategic position during a specific historic period. Yet for the *fengshui* theorists, it was the physically highest mountain in a given region that should be designated as the *zhen.* In our case, Mt. Yang, 338 metres above sea level, is indeed the highest in the Suzhou region; Mt. Tianping, by contrast, reaches to an elevation of only 221 metres. Therefore, we may say that, in one sense, the *fengshui* application of the idea of the *zhen* to mountains appears more strictly geographical, i.e. more objective in terms of measurement and location, whereas the historians' views are more subjective in terms of literary inspiration; but in another sense, *fengshui* theorists could to some extent detach themselves from strictly practical considerations - probably because they believed that their concerns were of long-term geomantic effects, whereas historians seem to have been ready to use the term *zhen* in their accounts of the topological features in the light of strategic and military conditions.

7.3.2 City Form

In the *fengshui* of building, especially in the *fengshui* notions derived from the Xingshi theories, most cases represent what Freedman (1979b:319) calls "the significance of resemblances." The *Pingjiang Jishi*, a casual work written by Gao Lü 高履 probably in the early 1350s when he was the prefect of Suzhou, provides us with such an example:

> The city wall of Suzhou, as the old story tells us, was built by [Wu] Zixu at the time of King Helü of Wu. Thus it is called Helü Cheng. . . . The city is in the form of the character *ya* 亞; the common people do not know this, taking it otherwise, as the form of a tortoise[-shell].

The discord between the elite's perception of the form of the city and the populace's interpretation of it, is revealed here most explicitly. For Gao Lü and those who produced the local gazetteers of Suzhou, the city should be properly seen and depicted as assuming the form of a particular ideogram - an idea that had been formed at least as early as the Tang period when the *Wudi Ji* was written, (see section 4.3 above) and continuously emphasised in all the gazetteers up to the

Republican era. Yet for the common people, the use of the tortoise-shell to describe the form of the city was naturally more acceptable: it employed a figural language that could more easily be understood and expressed than the written language, and the meanings of this symbolic image had long formed part of the built-in notions of all the Chinese.

Hence, although the tortoise-shell symbolism of the city of Suzhou perhaps did not come from the *fengshui* manuals, it derived, to borrow Freedman's (ibid.) words again, "from the trained fancy of ordinary minds." Like the case of the carp and net symbolism of Quanzhou cited by Freedman, the tortoise here is an "extraneous" symbol. It could not have occurred in just any circumstances, as the standard *fengshui* symbols forming the discourse of the manuals do, but existed only on the basis of the specific conditions of the city of Suzhou (and the city of Chengdu). With this perception of the city form, we are indeed at what Feuchtwang (1974:171) sees as "the most inexpert and popular level of interpretation," although it was most unlikely to have emerged directly from the uneducated masses, since the majority of the residents in and around the city may not have had access to the city maps which were crucial for the conception of this idea.

Gao Lü does not tell us whether such a reading into the form of the city presages good or ill fortune for the city and prefectural residents, but we could reasonably expect that the tortoise, regarded by the Chinese as one of the Four Spiritual Animals (Siling 四靈),[460] was taken as a favourable symbol for the city and the prefecture.[461] This is in fact indirectly expressed in an elaborated account

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460 The other three spiritual animals are the Lin 麟 (unicorn, imaginary deer-like animal with one horn and scales on its body), Feng 鳳 (phoenix) and Long 龍 (dragon). (See *Li Ji*, vol. 22: "Li Yun," no. 9) These four animals are occasionally also called the Four Auspicious Animals (Sirui 四瑞). (See, e.g., *Wujun Zhi*, vol. 44: "Qishi") Note that Suzhou folklore has it that there are four auspicious things in the region, one of them being the White Tortoise. (Ibid.)

461 Suzhou is not the sole case in which the symbol of the tortoise was favourably applied to a settlement or a tomb. The building of the city walls of Chengdu 成都, the provincial capital of present-day Sichuan 四川, is another example involving the tortoise. Legend has it, as the *Sou Shen Ji* (vol. 13) claims, that Zhang Yi 張儀 (?-310 B.C.), the prime minister of the state of Qin, was commissioned to build the city walls in 311 B.C.

> The walls collapsed repeatedly. Suddenly, a huge tortoise emerged from the River [Yangzi] and crawled to the south-east corner of the walls of the inner-enclosure before it died. [Zhang] Yi consulted a wizard [*wu* 巫] on this. The wizard suggested building the walls along [the tracks left by] the tortoise. The walls were then constructed successfully. Thus [the city] is called Gui Hua Cheng 龜化城 [lit. "the city evolved from a tortoise"]. (Cf. *Yuanhe Junxian Zhi*, vol. 31: "Chengdufu")

Even now, the city of Chengdu is still known as "the City of Tortoise" (Guicheng 龜城). Yet

of the siege of the city by the Ming forces in 1367, contained in the "Taifu Shoucheng" section of Yang Xunji's 楊循吉 (1458-1546) *Wuzhong Guyu*:

> The Grand Mentor [Taifu 太傅], Wuning, Prince of Zhongshan [Zhongshan Wuning Wang 中山武寧王], who was actually the marshal [of the Ming forces] at that time, had the city completely surrounded. Those who were within the city walls sustained [the attack] for nine months. . . . After the long siege, Wuning could not take the city. There was someone, perhaps an advisor, who suggested: "The city of Suzhou is in the form of a tortoise[-shell]. It becomes more impregnable if it is attacked simultaneously from all the six positions [i.e. the six city gates]. It would be better to select one position only and attack it suddenly and fiercely, then it would be broken." . . . [462]

Although the siege eventually ended with the victorious Ming army entering the city, the defence was seen as unusually strong because of the particular shape of the city walls, interpreted symbolically in the light of that popular *fengshui* idea. In military terms, this does not seem a sound explanation of the fall of Suzhou: while Zhang Shicheng's men fought unusually tenaciously in defence of the besieged city, the Ming attacking battalions were so overwhelming that their onslaught on all the six gates[463] would have forced the dispersion of Zhang's soldiers along a wide front, thus weakening the strength of the defence, the collapse of which was marked by the Ming general Xu Da's 徐達 (1332-1385) entering the city through Feng Gate and his assistant Chang Yuchun 常遇春 (1330-1369) through Chang Gate. However, this is not a discourse on military strategy and tactics, nor a strictly historic record of the battle. What is communicated in it is the popular *fengshui* conception of the event which was seen as influenced by the geomantic conditions of the city.

The section in Yang Xunji's work continues with an account of the ensuing event, which may not strictly concern *fengshui* ideas but nevertheless shares *fengshui*'s main characteristics:

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another example can be cited from the *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 10) published in 1834. The terrain of a Ding 丁 family's tombs at Shedu 射瀆 in Changzhou county was seen as being in the form of a tortoise. It was allegedly given as a favour by a friend who was a specialist in *fengshui*, and, eventually, a successful imperial official was produced in the family.

462 It is interesting to note that although this embroidered version of the event is cited in both the *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 146) and *Wuxian Zhi* (vol. 78), it remains part of the sections entitled "Zaji" 雜記, i.e. "miscellaneous notes," rather than being incorporated into the "orthodox" history of Suzhou.

463 From the *Ming Shi* (vol. 125: "Liezhuan," no. 13: "Xu Da") and *Huangchao Ping-Wu Lu* (vol. B), we know that the Ming armies were stationed at eleven positions around the city.

> The Prince of Wuning then led the soldiers and entered [the city through] Chang Gate, . . . without slaughtering a single civilian [in the city]. At the same time, the Duke of Xinguo [Xinguo Gong 信國公], infuriated by not being able to break the defence of the city for a long time, declared that once the city fell, [everyone,] even any three-year old child, should be cut into three pieces. As Xinguo led his soldiers, entering [the city through] Feng Gate, they killed whichever city residents they encountered. When informed of this act, Wuning sent a dispatch-rider to confront Xinguo's army and ordered: "Whoever kills those who have surrendered will be executed." Then Xinguo's army stopped the killing. . . . Feng Gate was where Xinguo initially entered [the city]; to date a hundred years have passed since then, but the area is still desolate. Wuning entered [the city through] Chang Gate, and thus it is now a prosperous area unsurpassed by all other gates.

From a historian's point of view, this story is an even poorer document than that of the preceding passage; but in sociological terms, it can probably be seen as revealing, when its content is compared with its historic backgrounds, of an interesting side of the mentality of those who created this story and those who shared their feelings.

From the historiographical works produced during the Ming and early Qing periods, we learn that, unlike Chang Yuchun, Xu Da was especially well-known for his disciplined conduct of military actions in all parts of China, and that his armies were so well-disciplined that the fall of the city of Suzhou was accompanied by no looting or pillaging.[464] What appears yet more curious and fascinating concerns the Ming army commanders mentioned in the passage quoted above, namely, Wuning, Prince of Zhongshan and the Duke of Xinguo. Who are these two personalities?

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464 In the *Ming Shi*, (vol. 125: "Liezhuan," no. 13: "Xu Da") we read:

> As the city was about to be captured, [Xu] Da made a request of [Chang] Yuchun: "Once the troops enter [the city], I will camp on the left [i.e. east] side [of the city], and your Excellency will camp at the right [i.e. west] side [of the city]." He then issued an order to all the army officers and soldiers: "Whoever plunders the civilians will be executed; whoever damages their buildings will be executed; and whoever finds himself twenty *li* away from the camp will be executed." Thus after the armies entered [the city], the people of Suzhou lived in peace and security as before.
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> At that time, among famous generals, [Xu] Da and [Chang] Yuchun were definitely held in esteem. . . . Yuchun was agile and brave [in battles], daring to penetrate deep [into enemy lines]; while Da was especially proficient in strategy. Yuchun would not capture a city without slaughtering; Da never inflict any disturbance on [the places] where he had reached.

See also the similar account of the event in the *Huangchao Ping-Wu Lu* (vol. C) and the remarks by Mote (1962:138).

According to the *Huang Ming Benji*, *Huangchao Ping Wu Lu* (vol. C) and *Ming Shi* (vol. 125), on the return of the triumphant Ming task force, the title of "Duke of Xinguo" was conferred on Xu Da, and the title of "Duke of Eguo" (Eguo Gong 鄂國公) on Chang Yuchun. When Chang died of sudden illness in 1369, the emperor bestowed the posthumous titles of "Prince of Kaiping" (Kaiping Wang 開平王) and "the Loyal and Mighty" (Zhongwu 忠武) on him. After Xu died in 1385, he was given the posthumous titles of "Prince of Zhongshan" and "the Mighty and Peaceful" (Wuning 武寧). It is clear, then, that the two characters referred to in the *Wuzhong Guyu* are in fact one and the same person, i.e. Xu Da, whose identity is intentionally[465] split into two: the one who is said to have led the army entering the city through Feng Gate, allegedly inflicting misfortunes on the city then and in the years to come, is referred to by one of Xu Da's title gained in his life time, right after he captured the city of Suzhou; whereas the other one, who is said to have led the army entering the city through Chang Gate, this being believed to have presaged the prosperity of the city, is alluded to by Xu Da's posthumously bestowed titles.[466]

Why? We certainly cannot be sure of precisely reading the thoughts of those who elaborated the story, but I would hypothesise that what is expressed in it is their ambivalent attitudes towards the overthrow of Zhang Shicheng's regime by the Ming forces and its lasting effects. Many people of Suzhou may not have believed that the Mandate of Heaven had shifted to the Ming; they fought against the enemy armies indomitably, and were said to remain loyal to Zhang Shicheng even years after the fall of the city.[467] Their enmities against early Ming rule were aggravated by the banishment to the arid Huai 淮 areas of thousands of the local rich and men who had held office under Zhang,[468] and by the new, punitive taxes imposed on the Suzhou

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465 Since Yang Xunji was a highly acclaimed local scholar of the Ming, who had produced many valuable works on Suzhou's history, customs, and the like, it is most unlikely that he could have mistaken Xu Da (with all his titles) for any other individual.

466 In the eleventh month of 1370, Xu Da was appointed to an additional honorary position, of that Grand Mentor, which however is not a title of honour.

467 Mote (1962:140) indicates that they concealed Zhang Shicheng's two little sons to prevent their capture by Ming agents, and secretly sacrificed to Zhang's memory. There are also stories revealing the lingering feelings of the people of Suzhou. We are told by the *Ye Ji* (vol. 1) that years after Suzhou was captured, the people there still mentioned Zhang Shicheng by the name "King Zhang," and were grateful to him, even for his eventual surrender to the Ming army to spare the residents further suffering. We are also told by the *Jiansheng Yewen* how much Zhu Yuanzhang, then supposed to be hailed as the "Son of Heaven," was astonished and angered by an old woman calling him on the quiet "old chap" (*laotour* 老頭兒) on the street of Nanjing, as compared to the people of Suzhou referring to Zhang Shicheng, a defeated and executed "bandit" in the emperor's eyes, as "King Zhang".

468 The best known, and probably the extreme case, of the casualties of the aftermath of the Ming conquest were Gao Qi and Wang Yi. (See section 5.2 above, and Mote

region,[469] which, as Gu Gongxie says, (XXZ, vol. C: "Su-Song Liangzhong zhi You") averaged ten times higher than those elsewhere in the empire. On the other hand, the new local government, having replaced that of Zhang Shicheng, was, as Mote (1962:108) insists, "efficient, well-organised, and thorough - all of the things that the Chang Shih-cheng [i.e. Zhang Shicheng] rebel regime had failed to be." More importantly, it was the Ming period, especially after the imperial capital was formally transferred from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421, that witnessed the steady rise of Suzhou, to its eventually becoming the dominant metropolis in the entire Lower Yangzi region.[470]

Thus, by the mid-Ming, bitter memories of the harsh treatment of Suzhou by Zhu Yuanzhang may still have lingered on, whereas the increasing wealth and prosperity there, epitomised by the development of the area at Chang Gate, was hardly deniable. What is communicated in that fabricated story of the Ming armies' entering the city is therefore a perception of the combination of the good and ill fortunes that had been brought upon Suzhou during the turbulent second half of the fourteenth century. This history of the region in these decades is somewhat "condensed" to the single event in 1367. Xu Da is logically taken as the symbol of the victorious Ming forces; the prosperity that ensued from the early fifteenth century around Chang Gate is interpreted as heralded by the favourable side of Xu Da's action, whereas the enduring plight around Feng Gate is explained as foreboded

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1962:234-43)

469 In the *Ye Ji* (vol. 1) we read:

> Taizu 太祖 [i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang] was exasperated at the city of Suzhou's not having submitted for a long time, and resentful of the people who adhered to the bandit [i.e. Zhang Shicheng]. In addition, they were in bond with the wealthy and thus resisted for them to the end. For these reasons, he ordered the seizure of all the rent registers of the powerful families by the relevant government agencies, and had the [new] fixed tax made equal to the amount [calculated on the basis of these rent registers]. Consequently, the taxes levied on Suzhou were especially heavy, probably in order to punish the maladies of one time, and in later times they would be relaxed.

Yet the exceptionally heavy tax quotas persisted down to the late nineteenth century. (See section 1.2.1 above; cf. Marmé 1993:27)

470 Marmé (1993:32) suggests that even "the results of early Ming policies were not necessarily detrimental to the interests of Suzhou as a collectivity."

> However unwelcome to the individual involved, the exile of elite and artisan families - a practice which affected natives of Suzhou more often than it had those of most other places - had the unintended effect of creating an unusually dense and well-developed network of particularistic contacts in every corner of the empire. Such networks played a critical role, particularly in trade, throughout the late imperial period.

by the imagined atrocious side of Xu's action.[471] The sharp contrast between the conditions of the two areas, symbolising the complicated fate of Suzhou at that time, is referred to as consequential upon the different bearings of the Ming victory and subsequent rule. Here, though, from a discussion of the popular geomantic notion of the city form we have digressed to note a psychological projection of the political, social and economic life of the people of Suzhou in the first half of the Ming period, whereas the *fengshui* interpretations of the city are more centrally pertinent to our topic.

7.3.3 Conformation of City Space and Principal Structures

Our last example of *fengshui* interpretations of the city of Suzhou comes from the casual works of two nineteenth-century local scholars, namely Zhang Zilin's *Honglan Yisheng* written in 1822 and Shen Shouzhi's *Jiechao Biji* probably written in the 1860s. Unlike the preceding case in which the key symbol, i.e. the tortoise-shell, stands basically extraneous to the discourse of *fengshui* manuals, the one that follows is hinged upon the dragon, a standard and most commonly used symbol of the Xingshi school. "Dragons," Freedman (1979b:319) notes, "are themselves the outward expression of the favourable mystical forces animating a landscape." In our case, however, this symbolic creature is perceived by an identification, not of the natural topographical conditions, but of the particular conformations of the space and principal structures of the city.

Let us begin with the passage in Zhang Zilin's work (*Honglan Yisheng*, vol. 4: "Suozai"):

> Hulong 護龍 [lit. "protecting the dragon"] Street[472] runs straight from south to north through the city. The specialists in landforms [*xingjia* 形家] have indicated that the street is the dragon's body; the North Temple Pagoda[473] is its tail; the prefectural school is

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471 Still another fictitious acount of the event is found in *Pengchuang Leiji* (vol. 1: "Gongchen Ji"). It does not put the two personalities into one figure, but makes a switch of them as if Xu Da, not Chang Yuchun, entered the city through Chang Gate.

472 The street was in the position of present-day Renmin 人民 Road, dividing the urban territories of Wu and Changzhou counties during the imperial period. This street had most probably not acquired a name consisting of the character denoting "dragon" by Lu Xiong's time in the second half of the fourteenth century, when it was simply called "the Great Street" (Dajie 大街). (SPCK, vol. 1: "Xi'nan Yu") But by the early Qing, it may have started to be known by the name Wolong 臥龍 (lit. "reclining dragon") Street, which was later changed to Hulong Street after one of the Qing emperors' Southern Inspection Tours.

473 The North Temple Pagoda (Beisi Ta 北寺塔), located at the north end of Hulong Street

> its head; the Twin Pagodas[474] are its horns, taking in the cosmic breath from the *chenxun* 辰巽 [i.e. east by south] direction; the double wells in front of the main gate of the prefectural school are its eyes; and its nearby land is its brain, because it produces [a special kind of] peppermint whose fragrance is not too pungent but very delicate, like the aroma of *longnao* 龍腦 [i.e. borneol, but lit. "dragon's brain"], and thus being called *longnao* peppermint.

This is a retrospective *fengshui* interpretation not only elaborated from the configuration of some of the principal urban structures, but also facilitated by the appellations of certain places in the city.[475] In Figure 7-3, I mark out on the diagrammatic map of the city the positions of some of the city structures involved in this interpretation, which shows that the dragon image seen by the *fengshui* advocates has little to do with these real structures. It is in fact an example of "projection of the imagination," to borrow Feuchtwang's (1974:242) words, aimed principally not at foretelling the future of the city, but, in the manner of recollection, at verifying its success in the past.

It is worth noting that the key inspirational element for this interpretation is the prefectural school-temple located in the south by west of the city. The topic gains more interest if we take a quick review of various versions of the account of the initial founding of the school from the Northern Song onwards. Both the *Wujun Tujing Xuji* (vol. A: "Xuexiao") and the *Wujun Zhi* (vol. 4: "Xuexiao") record that, in 1035, Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052), a prominent scholar-official of the Northern Song, "separated out a corner of the land of the South Garden as its site and then had it established" after having successfully petitioned in a memorial to the emperor concerning this matter. The site, picturesque as it must have been, was a

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and seventy-six metres tall, was the highest building in pre-modern Suzhou, and in all China only second to the "Porcelain Pagoda" of Nanjing, the latter being destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century. The temple to which it is attached is formally known as Baoen Si 報恩寺, founded early in the third century A.D. For a brief chronological account of the history of its reconstruction, see Mote 1973:50.

474 The Twin Pagodas are located about one hundred metre east of Hulong Street. The temple to which they are attached was first built in 861.

475 Although we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that the name of the street, seen as symbolising the dragon's body, was given in the light of this *fengshui* idea, I prefer to suggest that the former happened prior to the latter. I have explained that the street may have acquired a name involving "dragon" in the early Qing, especially in the second half of the seventeenth century. It seems very likely, on the other hand, that this *fengshui* interpretation was made not earlier than the Qianlong 乾隆 reign-period (1736-1795) or even the Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign-period (1796-1820), because, given the fact that this interpretation is a retrospective one in nature, the visible "effects" of this set of favourable geomantic conditions on the local community - notably the success of the locals in the imperial examinations - refer only to these two periods, as we will see very shortly below in the passage cited from Shen Shouzhi's work.

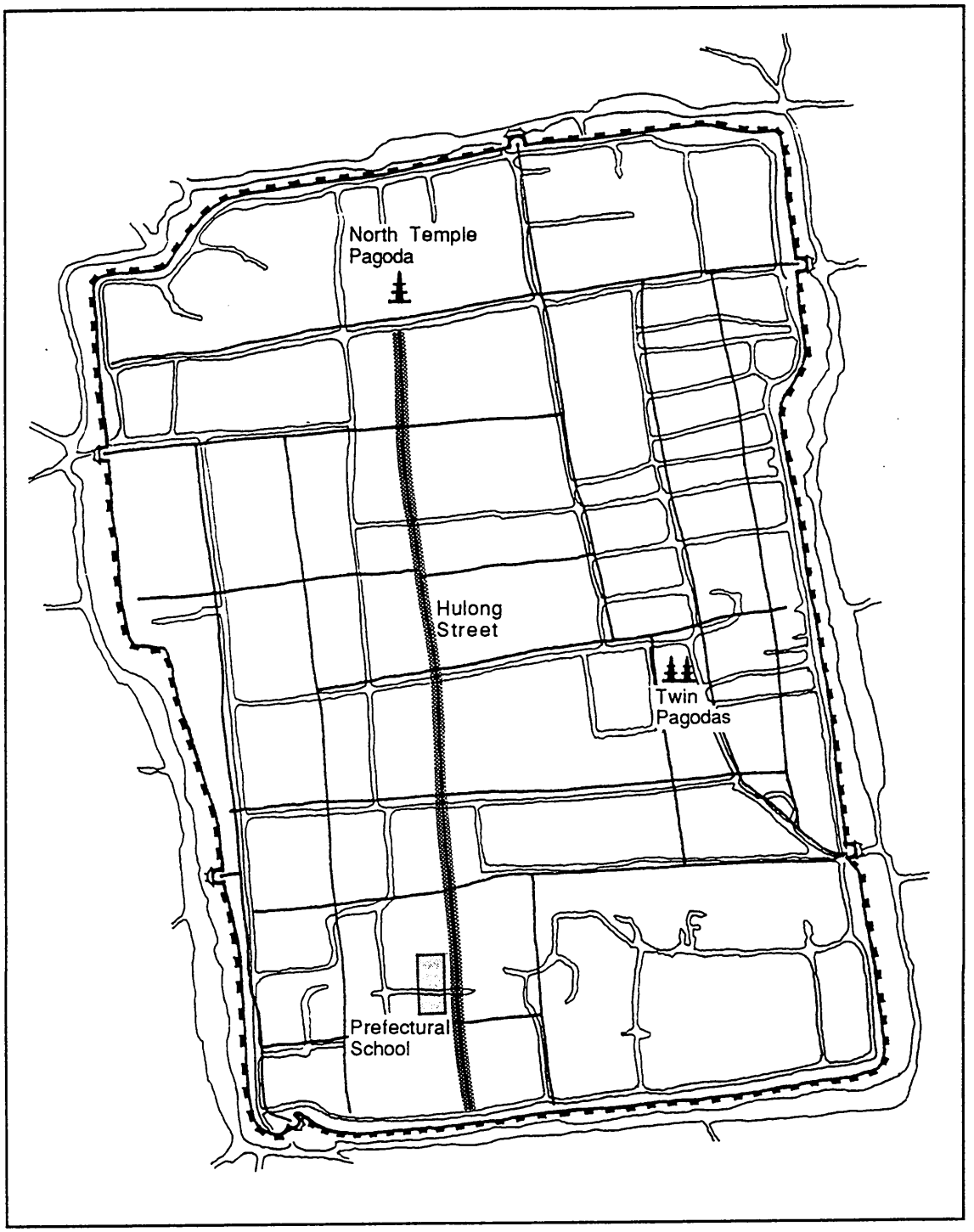

Figure 7-3 Positions of the main urban structures involved in the cognition of the dragon image in the city.

convenient choice, but no geomantic considerations are mentioned or even implied by either Zhu Changwen or Fan Chengda, the authors of the two respective books. By 1506 when Wang Ao wrote his *Gusu Zhi*, a new version of the event appeared. In Volume 24 entitled "School," the record reads basically the same as those of the two Song writers, but an interesting interlinear note is interpolated:

> The area [where the school is located] is at the South Garden previously possessed by Qian Yuanliao, Prince of Guangling.[476] His Honour [i.e. Fan Zhongyan] acquired a corner of it on which he intended to build his own house. A geomancer claimed that [this was a place where] highly respected officials would frequently be produced. His Honour said, "How can my family's nobility be as preferable as the nobility of all the people of Suzhou? This [more preferred nobility] will be limitless." Hence he took [the area] as [the site of] the school.[477]

From the historic point of view, the story of Fan Zhongyan's initial intention of building a house on this site must be a fabrication,[478] as most probably is the geomancer's advice. Yet for the people of Suzhou, this account was surely as credible as the one that is historically verifiable, its credibility being largely due to the traditionally admired deeds of Fan Zhongyan, which are epitomised in the famous motto expressed in his *Yueyang Lou Ji* 岳陽樓記: "Be concerned before anyone else in the world, and enjoy oneself only after everyone else finds enjoyment." Because of the alleged high geomantic quality of the site and of the paramount importance of

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476 Qian Yuanliao was the sixth son of Qian Liu 錢鏐 (852-932), the founder of the Wu-Yue 吳越 Kingdom (907-978) based on Hangzhou.

477 A similar passage appears, in a slight different wording and again as an interlinear note, in Xu Song and Zhang Dachun's *Baicheng Yanshui* (vol. 1: "Suzhoufu:" "Fuxue") published in 1690.

478 Not only is there little evidence of it found in the Song documents, but the story reads differently in diverse versions in the Ming. Qian Gu 錢穀 (1508-?), for example, presents in his *Wudu Wencui Xuji* (vol. 4: "Xuexiao": commentary on Wang Ruyu's 王汝玉 *Suxue Ba Yong*) a somewhat different and seemingly even more embroidered story:

> His Honour Wenzheng 文正 [i.e. Fan Zhongyan] had a garden house in the south of the city. A geomancer suggested that [the place] would frequently produce highly respected officials. His Honour said: "Rather than having it remain in [the possession of] one private family, it would be better if it were to be shared publicly by a whole prefecture. Then he charitably gave up the house and set up the present school.

Gu Zhentao (1750-?) in his *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 6) talks about yet another version of the story:

> Wenzheng originally opened up [part of] the land of the South Garden and built his own house. On second thoughts, he said, "Rather than having it for one private family, it would be better to have it shared publicly with the whole prefecture." Then he . . . converted it to an alms-house (*yizhai* 義宅).

Here the prefectural school is not even mentioned.

the prefectural school to the success of the local candidates in the imperial examinations, by Zhang Zilin's time it was conveniently identified as the dragon's head, and the rest of the objects were elaborated accordingly to form a seemingly consistent symbolic system.

Zhang Zilin does not include in his work any explicit value judgement on this *fengshui* situation of the city. It is Shen Shouzhi who pays more attention to this matter. In his *Jiechao Biji*, Shen writes:

> I do not have much belief in *fengshui* theories. Yet there are also cases in which they cannot be defamed. Our Suzhou's success in the imperial examinations is unmatchable among other provinces. During the Qianlong 乾隆 and Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign-periods [1736-1795 and 1796-1820], the success was at its peak. . . . Hulong Street in the city, over ten *li* long, taking the prefectural school as the dragon's head and the North Temple Pagoda as the dragon's tail, has a bearing on the *fengshui* situation of the whole city. It has been known from the past that this street is unsuitable for tunnelling or digging, for it has been feared that such kind of acts would impair the dragon range. In the mid-Daoguang 道光 reign-period [1821-1850], . . . the area [near the Guandi Temple by Hulong Street] was cleaned up, and the twin wells there were dredged and sunk, and wooden railings were installed around them for the convenience of the residents in drawing water. From then on, successful candidates in the examinations at both the provincial and the national levels became fewer and fewer. In the one at the national level in 1850, it actually went so wrong [for Suzhou] that all its candidates failed. The blame [for these failures] started to be laid on the dredging of the wells, which impaired the dragon range. A few members of local gentry petitioned the authority to have them filled in and blocked up, but the situation remained unchanged and their effort did not bear any fruit. Consequently, the city has now been occupied by the bandits [i.e. Taiping rebels]. I wonder whether there will be anyone discussing this matter again [i.e. filling the wells] once the city is recovered.

Unlike Zhang Zilin who wrote his *Honglan Yisheng* at the time when Suzhou was still prosperous, Shen Shouzhi lived during the period when life in Suzhou had taken a dramatic down-turn; he witnessed in particular the fall of the city to the Taiping rebels and all the ensuing misfortunes. Thus, in contrast to Zhang, who pays attention to the interpretation of the favourable *fengshui* situation of the city, Shen inevitably gives more of his mind to regretting the unwanted "interference" with this situation, which he sees as accounting for all the mishaps that Suzhou experienced from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

7.4 APPLICABILITY OF *FENGSHUI* IDEAS TO URBAN CONSTRUCTIONS

Now we return to the central issue raised earlier above in the opening passage of this chapter: how much and in what way *fengshui* was important in the formation and transformation of regional or local cities like Suzhou. This is a very large question, in the sense that every city was more or less a unique case with regard to the specific historic conditions under which it was built and developed. It would therefore be unwise to be hasty in generalisation. It should be recognised that the time and process of the establishment of a city may render it characteristic of different sources of cosmological ideas.[479] I would therefore only hypothesise that, although *fengshui* ideas widely influenced the site-choosing, site-adjustment and construction of tombs, houses,[480] villages, and, very possibly to some extent, imperial capitals, we should not take it for granted that the apparently omnipresent practice of *fengshui* was equally active in the planning and construction of regional and local cities.

Before presenting analyses and arguments in support of my hypothesis, it is important here to acknowledge that my inquiries are entirely based on literary evidence. Latent problems may ensue from this approach, since the information provided by the surviving written documents is often misleading as their authors

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479 A considerable number of cities, as is the case with Suzhou, boast their alleged foundation as state capitals or other kinds of settlements in the Zhou period, and it is very possible that these cities were established on a cosmic scheme of one kind or another. The systems of cosmological symbolism employed in these cities manifest distinctive local beliefs and conventions, as well as the extent to which the local traditional cultures interacted with that of the Zhou; but, as I have stated earlier, these systems could not be labelled with the name of *fengshui* which was developed centuries later, even though *fengshui* advocates might have found these early examples of city construction illuminating and appealing, with their authority from the past. Other regional or local cities among which probably very few were constructed from scratch, were usually established - notably by means of constructing walls and with some degree of planning - at the sites of the settlements of natural growth. To gather and analyse information about whether many of these existing settlements were initially built on *fengshui* or any other cosmic schemes is of course a painstaking task, and neither the limited space nor time allow me to take this up in the present study. Let us suppose that their early constructions did follow the *fengshui* principles, I wonder whether the original *fengshui* or other cosmological schemes in these settlements, on which the later plannings were superimposed, still conveyed the same meanings to their residents of these newly established cities; if so, how much were these meanings inherited; and if not, whether they simply went into oblivion or were transformed into some new implications pertinent to the cities. At this stage of the research, I have to leave these questions unanswered.

480 If Freedman's assertion that *fengshui* was not for the poor and humble proves to have been the case, (1971:125) any sweeping generalisation about the influence over the construction of tombs and houses has to be carefully avoided.

were most likely to have been biased to various extent against ideas and even historical facts which they found hard to accept. What would be more reliable for the study of the materialisation of ideas is archaeological and remaining physical evidence. Here, however, lies the difficulty fairly specific to the investigation of the application of *fengshui* to building activities during the periods that are remote from our time: since the social function of *fengshui* as a way of conceiving, perceiving and dealing with reality was basically psychological and ritualistic in nature, and since its loosely defined prescriptions and regulations could be manipulated to such extent that they left the way open to diverse, and often contradictory, interpretations of particular situations, it is, at least in most cases, impossible to determine on physical evidence whether and, if it ever did, to what extent, *fengshui* operated in any building project. Hence, despite all their inherent shortcomings, the surviving written documents seem to be the only sources that we can possibly rely on.

The influence of *fengshui* on the physical construction of the cities was less in literary evidence than its influence on other architectural activities in imperial China. Those students who wish to insist on the ubiquity of *fengshui* in traditional building activities may feel frustrated when they find it extremely difficult to obtain consistent and reliable literary records about its influence on the construction of regional and local cities. *Fengshui* theories have been very richly documented. Many of their discourses enunciate where and how a city *should* be planned and built according to their principles, but much fewer real cases of cities as evidence in support of these theories are mentioned than those of houses, villages and tombs. The accounts about how a city was actually built with *fengshui* considerations, scattered and very small in number as they are, usually appear in local gazetteers or casual notes (*biji* 筆記). Since many of these accounts were probably written centuries after the events to which they refer, their reliability is very questionable.[481] The problem of apocryphal accounts has always been troublesome to all academic approaches. Yet this problem seems to have been more serious in the case of *fengshui*, and especially in the case of its influence on the physical forms of cities. The cause of the intensity of this problem concerning the influence of *fengshui* on city constructions appears to be two-fold: (1) the scarcity of actual cases in which cities were built on *fengshui* schemes, or at least, the lack of contemporary records of such events, and (2) the apparently abstruse nature of

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481 Even those who wrote passages of this kind often emphasised their uncertainty by putting at the beginning of them terms like "it is said that" or "some people thought that."

fengshui theories making more room for various elaborations.

Since *fengshui* as a set of cosmological ideas has its social, political and cultural implications, two related lines of reasoning may be taken in support of my hypothesis. One of them concerns the social attitudes towards *fengshui* influence; that is, we may ask how much enthusiasm the governing individual or group of people of the community had for *fengshui* ideas. In his discussion of the cosmology of Chinese imperial capitals, Wright (1977:55) insists that "despite its ancient pedigree and the approval of Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi 朱熹], *feng-shui* and the 'emanation' theory associated with it did not become an integral part of the dominant Confucian ideology or of its subideology of the city. It was introduced into later city planning[482] not by the scholar-officials but by their often restive masters, the emperors of China." To extend this observation from the field of imperial city construction to the whole of society, one is inclined to suggest that, apparently omnipresence as they were, *fengshui* ideas and, especially, practice, were not entirely approved openly by the scholar-officials and classically educated intellectuals who, as a group, consciously made efforts to perpetuate the elite culture of imperial China.[483] This is certainly an over-generalised statement,

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482 Since Wright's argument concentrates on the imperial capitals, I regard the terms "city planning" here as not including that of other types of cities.

483 Freedman (1979b:316) holds that the practitioners of *fengshui* were in one sense a part of the elite. Elsewhere, he is more cautious about this:

> The sources are too vague for us to say exactly how the ranks of the geomancers were filled, but we may well suspect that the typical geomancer was either a failure of the imperial examination system (as was often the doctor, the schoolmaster, and the scribe) or the product of a literate family not yet ripe for the standing of the elite. (Op. cit. 324)

In brief, the geomancer's social status was of an intermediate kind. (435, note 9) He was "a kind of literatus;" at least he was "literate." (329) But a literate man was not necessarily a part of the elite. In his study of communication, class and consciousness in late imperial China, Johnson (1985a:37) has made it clear that the appropriate figure for thinking about the literate realm is not a network, but a hierarchy, and that the most meaningful subdivisions of this realm were related to class. It was principally the gentry group, consisting of active and retired officials at the upper level, those qualified to hold office in the middle: civil and military *jinshi* 進士 and *juren* 舉人, *gongsheng* 貢生 by examination and purchase (in the late imperial period), and holders of *shengyuan* 生員 and *jiansheng* 監生 in the lower reaches, that I refer to as the elite. It was also these members who were able to make, or assist in making, effective decisions on city construction works. A number of *fengshui* theorists and advocates, such as Guo Pu and Liu Ji, were undoubtedly members of the educated elite. Yet the majority of its practitioners probably were, because of their limited education, merely "moderately literate" - to borrow Johnson's (op.cit. 38) words - in the sense that, although they could write, they might not be capable of using writing to order and record their thoughts in highly subtle and allusive ways.

because the social reality of imperial China was much more complicated than a simple, sharp division of the population into three groups - the emperors and the populace at the two ends, and the intellectuals in the middle.[484] Yet there is not space enough here to pursue in detail an analysis of this kind, nor would my knowledge and materials at my disposal be equal to the task if there were. My discussion therefore has to dwell on the general perspective outlined above, and the subsequent conclusions in many cases are drawn on an *ex silentio* basis.

There were those who were deep-rootedly sceptical about the legitimacy of *fengshui*, or even vigorously objected to it on a Confucian moral ground.[485] Individuals with such uncompromising outlook may not have been many in society, even though their scholarly activities formed what Needham calls a "sceptical tradition" in history.[486] The majority of Chinese intellectuals may have paid certain attention to *fengshui* ideas, perhaps partly due to the fact that the underlying principles of *fengshui* were in conformity with the long lasting world view of the Chinese people, and that many of its ideas and symbols derived, through elaboration and sometimes distortion, from ancient cosmic conceptions which were the backbone of the orthodox cosmology; but they were reluctant to accept it fully,[487] especially on its pragmatic ground, even though they apparently did not

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484 Johnson in his elucidating article entitled "Communication, Class, and Consciousness in Late Imperial China" (1985a) has made it clear that social structure during the Ming and Qing periods was extremely complex, and that we ought to pay attention to the factors relating both to position in the systems of communication and to position in the structure of dominance, if we are to determine whether an individual's consciousness could be taken as representing a certain group's collective mentalities. Studies on people's attitudes towards *fengshui* are no exception.

485 Wright (1977:55) mentions sceptics among the Song Neo-Confucians, notably Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1268) and Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086). In fact, objection to *fengshui* did not only come from the Neo-Confucians. To mention a few more scholars in the history of imperial China, Wang Chong 王充 of the Eastern Han rigorously argued against it in his *Lun Heng*, Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582) of the Ming dynasty and Xiong Bolong 熊伯龍 of the early Qing dynasty all scathingly criticised its doctrines. (See Zhang 1994:39-43 for a brief summary of those opinions against *fengshui*) In the "Kanyu" section of the *Gujin Tushu Jicheng*, (476/60-7) a large number of essays critical either of *fengshui* ideas or its excessive practice are incorporated.

486 See Needham's discussion of the Chinese sceptical tradition in 1956:365-95.

487 For those who did accept it, many of them still preferred to dissociate themselves from it by including cautious wordings in their writings. The Ming scholars Wang Qi 王圻 and Wang Siyi 王思義 are such individuals who evince this kind of stance. In their *Sancai Tuhui* (vol. 16) compiled in 1609, their fervent adoption of *fengshui* ideas on many occasions betrays the fact that they take its expositions as being acceptable. Yet after talking about the overall geographical conditions of China entirely in *fengshui* terms, they emphasise that "the words of the *kanyu jia* 堪輿家 certainly must not be entirely trusted, but . . . their books should not be cast away either. . . . Although there is no need always to follow . . . [*fengshui*] ideas, it would be helpful if its principle is kept clear in our mind."

categorically deny *fengshui* ideas in their cosmological sense. This kind of stance is usually reflected in their casual writings. In his *Su Tan* ("Dongping Zhiyi"), the Ming scholar-official Yang Xunji, for instance, tells us an interesting story of this kind. The father of his friend, a Mr. Wang, was one of the assistants of the prefect of Dongping 東平 in the 1440s. During the dredging of a river, a stone slab was found in an excavated ancient tomb, with an epitaph suggesting in *fengshui* terms that five hundred years later a prefectural assistant whose family name was Wang would save the tomb from being flooded away. Shortly after he moved the tomb, out of curiosity, to another site according to this somewhat prognostic passage, he was promoted to prefect. Yang Xunji continues:

> He then said with a smile: "The ancients only suggested that I would be a prefectural assistant. Now I have taken hold of the official seal [of the prefecture]. Have I gained excessively?" He continued his officialdom until he died.

Another example of this kind of attitude towards *fengshui* is revealed in a passage by Wei Guangfu 韋光黻 (*c.* 1789-1853), a Changzhou holder of the *shengyuan* 生員 degree and a locally well known poet, according to the *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 89: "Renwu," no. 16). He was seemingly interested in *fengshui* ideas and symbols. In his *Wenjian Chanyou Lu* - a casual piece of writing rather than a *fengshui* manual, he discusses some of the *fengshui* principles in fairly positive terms, but at the same time caustically criticises any excessive elaboration of its ideas. He bluntly states that "any day when it is bright, the air is fresh, and the wind and sunshine are genial, is the auspicious moment [for burial]," as opposed to the practice of time-choosing according to *fengshui* elaborations. More interesting is his scornful remark on the popular attribution of a few *dili* discourses to Liu Ji 劉基 (1311-1375), a prominent minister of the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang:

> This is especially ridiculous. Just think. The land under Heaven being as vast as it is, how could it all be surveyed piece by piece! Besides, [Liu Ji] was whole-heartedly assisting Taizu 太祖 [i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang] in conquering the world. Exploits and documents were so many that not a single day was free [for him]. How could he have had any spare time to do unimportant, leisurely things as those!

The point is not whether or not Liu Ji really wrote *fengshui* works - the *Kanyu Manxing*, for example, is most probably from his hand - but what Wei Guangfu thought of it, his writings unmistakably reading uncritical of *fengshui* itself. For Wei, *fengshui* remained "unimportant" in political and social life, and talking about or writing on it was simply some "leisure-time" activity, which should not

interfere with one's governmental duties.

Both Yang Xunji and Wei Guangfu were Suzhou scholars, but their attitudes towards *fengshui* ideas and practice are probably not far from representing the general stance of the majority of imperial scholars in the whole country. Even those who were not only sympathetic towards *fengshui* ideas but also in direct service of the emperors often maintained a cautious attitude. The remarks by one of the Imperial Inspectors (*zhongcheng* 中丞), Zhu Jian 朱鑒, in his memorial to the Ming throne in 1449, seem to have exemplified their ambivalent stance. While arguing in the light of *fengshui* ideas the advantages and disadvantages of some of the recently constructed buildings in the palatial complex in Beijing, he declares,

> [We] must not whole-heartedly believe in the art of Yinyang (*yinyang zhi shu* 陰陽之術), yet [we] could not entirely denounce the accounts of Dili (*dili zhi shu* 地理之書) either." (*Tianfu Guangji*, vol. 21: "Gongbu": "Yingjian")

Shen Shouzhi's remarks in his *Jiechao Biji* on the *fengshui* interpretation of the city of Suzhou, to which we will have occasion to return, is made in a tone strikingly similar to Zhu Jian's.

One may find that, among numerous imperial and local documents, examples like the ones which I have cited so far are relatively few indeed; but the opposite cases are much fewer. The citing of these examples, however, by no means implies that importance should be attached to whether or not the classically educated men actually believed in *fengshui*, a line of enquiry which would miss the point here. On this issue, Freedman (1979a:191) rightly warns us that "beliefs and disbeliefs are expressed in a context, and one can too easily fall into the trap of gathering evidence in the contexts of scepticism." Some of the local scholar-officials' indifference or, in some cases, repugnance, to pursuing any project of city construction in light of *fengshui* theory may not always indicate their total lack of belief, or more often, interest, in it. There is no doubt that *fengshui* occupied what Freedman (1979b:316) calls "a highly ambiguous status in the world of the educated." This ambiguity was brought about not only by the ambivalent stance of the majority of individual intellectuals towards *fengshui*, but also by their different backgrounds of education and self-cultivation; in other words, the educated must not be regarded as all standing on an intellectually undifferentiated plane. As Rawski (1985b:402) writes in cautioning against over-generalising this highly complex issue,

> Educated men were not necessarily creative intellectuals, and many must have adhered to beliefs in what we call the popular realm. We close a potentially important area of inquiry if we draw a sharp line between educated and uneducated that correlates with belief systems.

It seems reasonable to assume, for instance, that not every one of them would have objected to the undertakings of *fengshui* scheme in the building of his private houses, of the tombs of his parents or grandparents, or of his home village (if he originally came from a rural community), even though he could, at the right place and the right time, well have raised a voice in opposition to such undertakings in city construction.[488]

The question central to the present discussion is rather whether and to what extent the classically educated men accepted *fengshui* as an "ideology," to borrow Feuchtwang's (1974) word, which provided interpretations of the world as well as shaping actions within it. The evidence which I have assembled suggests that *fengshui* ideas perhaps never took up a significant position in the mentality of the majority of these members of society. Since it was precisely those intellectuals who were appointed to regional and local governmental posts, we could hardly expect them in most cases to have encouraged the application of *fengshui* in the construction of the cities in their charge. This is evident in various records of the city of Suzhou, in which we often read how the local scholar-officials, on occasions of building activities at the level of individual buildings, bridges or honorific gateways, either condemned the errors in the name of *fengshui*, or forcefully implemented schemes that were seen by some as incongruous with *fengshui* interpretations. One can hardly say that they were unfamiliar with its language - some of them may have been conversant with it, while others must at least knew some of it; nor that they rejected the orthodox cosmology that underlay *fengshui* - on the contrary, the orthodox cosmology constituted the very foundation of their world view. But this is not the same thing as accepting *fengshui* itself, a set of geomantic ideas elaborated on the basis of the orthodox cosmology for the *purpose* of procuring present and future wealth, health and happiness, i.e. good fortune in the broadest sense of the word.

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488 Although I do not yet have any information of this kind, the assumption should not be too wrong. To gather and analyse such information would take us an important step forward towards a better understanding of the possible different attitudes of a given scholar-official towards *fengshui* in different social contexts.

Yet to argue that there having been much less active influence of *fengshui* on the planning and building of regional and local cities than on the construction of houses, tombs, etc., was determined by imperial scholar-officials' reluctance to accept it fully, may turn out to be problematic. Like the question of beliefs and disbeliefs, the extent of its acceptance was socially contextual. This leads to the other, more important, line of reasoning which I take to support my hypothesis: the walled cities on which the local governments were based did not form the kind of social context which would have promoted, as did those of houses or villages, and, to a lesser degree, market towns and perhaps imperial capitals, the application of *fengshui* to their building projects.

Here we may limit our discussion to two traits of regional or local cities in imperial China, which set the social context of these cities apart from those of other social categories. One is associated with the attribute of urban social formation. Chinese society was largely based on family values; within the family or, to some extent, family-like, structure, decisions and actions taken by the leaders for the welfare of its members, right or wrong, were usually tolerated by the outsiders and the authorities.[489] Within such a domain, a scholar-official could have acted on *fengshui* ideas without any concern about serious criticism that would cost his official career or, at least, tarnish his reputation. The cities, however, never developed the distinctive institutions or any degree of autonomy with regard to the state, which would only have been possible within the looser, feudal matrix, (Elvin 1973:22) and their population did not form a corporate, self-identifying and self-perpetuating group who otherwise shared a common interest and, more importantly, a sense of common origin, but was basically a sum-total of individuals, each of whom was closely linked with the village from which the family had originated, and where its ancestral temple still stood. (Needham 1971:71-2; Mote 1977:102. See also section 3.1.2) In brief, unlike family systems, the cities

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489 Take an extreme case for example, Spence (1990;125) in discussing the Qing penal system cites a case, originally given in *Law in Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 390) edited by Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris, in which a father killed his son by burying him alive:

> The Ministry of Punishments carefully reviewed the facts and concluded that the governor had acted wrongly in sentencing the father to be beaten for the crime. Fathers who killed sons should be beaten only if they had acted "unreasonably," argued the ministry. In this case, the son had used foul language at his father, an act that deserved the death penalty: "Thus, although the killing was done intentionally, it was the killing of a son who had committed a capital crime by reviling his father." The father was acquitted.

were open institutions. Consequently, any decision or action taken by a county magistrate, a prefect or a provincial governor, which was of public nature, was open to attack by others. This may have been one of the specific conditions of the cities that deterred those scholar-officials who were sympathetic towards *fengshui* from taking concrete actions involving it in city construction.

The other aspect is connected with the social milieu of the governing body of the city. On the one hand, unlike tombs, houses, villages, and, to some degree, the imperial capitals which encompassed the governing individual's or group's personal, enduring possessions in both practical and symbolic terms, cities were never personal possessions of the regional and local governmental officials, nor could any prominent family or group of people in them make such a claim. (See section 3.1.2) Thus, even if an imperial official was a devotee of *fengshui*, he would seem to have had much less personal will supported by adequate power to implement its ideas into the physical transformation of the city as a whole, than in the realm of like activities in his family or lineage. On the other hand, China in the second half of the imperial period was principally what Johnson (1985a:48) calls "a grammatocracy: the learned ruled," where a single elite controlled all national institutions. (Op. cit. 47) Local governments in particular were one of such institutions in which scholar-officials clustered; the construction of cities as imperial administrative centres was exclusively the concern of the members of the cultural elite, except for very few cases when the emperors personally intervened.

I have noted that *fengshui* did not become an integral part of the dominant system of Confucian thoughts, nor did it form a fully accepted part of the collective mentality of the elite. The denunciation of *fengshui* practice and, perhaps to a lesser degree, of its theories, must have been more conspicuous in the social milieu of the local government than in that of many other institutions. A scholar-official had to be extra scrupulous in matters associated with geomancy, and his personal inclination to *fengshui* ideas was inevitably restrained within such a particular social context.[490] We should certainly acknowledge that it was Chinese cognition in general that the geomantic fate of a prefecture or county was held to derive not only from the siting of its capital city, (Skinner 1977c:262) but also from its form and spatial pattern, for a capital city was always regarded as the node and the symbol of

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490 Freedman (1979b:324) admits that, from the point of view of the elite, a practitioner of *fengshui* was tainted by his attachment to the popular and the "extra-bureaucratic," which was in contrast to the local government as the unquestionable "intra-bureaucratic."

the total administrative territory. But what the construction of capital really symbolised were, above all, the establishment of the rule of the imperial government and the consolidation of social order, both of which remained at the core of the elite culture perpetuated by the imperial scholar-officials as a whole. Hence it is likely that the populace's interest in the *fengshui* conditions of the city was often satisfied by *post hoc* theorising of its site-choosing and formation.

This is not to say that no city was ever consciously constructed, nor its site ever consciously chosen, on *fengshui* ideas, which were more active in the far south-east region than in others. Thus literary evidence is relatively more likely to be found in the local documents of the areas of present-day Zhejiang 浙江, Jiangxi 江西, Guangdong 廣東, Fujian 福建 and Taiwan 臺灣 provinces. In his study of the formation of cities in Taiwan, Lamley, for example, has mentioned the appearance in local gazetteers of references to divination and geomancy in accounts of wall construction in three northern Taiwanese cities, namely Xinzhu 新竹, Yilan 宜蘭 and Taibeifu 臺北府, and has emphasised the particular importance of *fengshui* considerations in the layout of Yilan, (1977:208 note 125 on page 706) although he does not tell us how reliable these references are likely to be for our learning of the actual process of the construction of these cities. The site of the prefectural city of Wenzhou 溫州, according to the *Zhejiang Tongzhi*, (vol. 24: "Chengchi," B: "Wenzhoufu") was determined by Guo Pu; similarly, Gu Gongxie claims in the "Huzhoucheng Fengshui" section of his XXZ (vol. A) that the prefectural city of Huzhou 湖州 (present-day Wuxing 吳興 in Northern Zhejiang) was planned geomantically by Guo Pu.[491] Yet could these accounts produced about one and a half millennia after the alleged events be trustworthy in historiographical terms?

Among the cities in the Suzhou region, only the building of the county city of Kunshan 崑山 is said to have been associated with *fengshui* - the choice of its site was probably made in consideration of the *fengshui* of Mt. Ma'an 馬鞍, (*Wujun Zhi*, vol. 38: "Xianji") but we do not know when exactly the event occurred - it might well go back to the Qin period, nor are we sure whether this is again a retrospective explanation. In fact, written records of city construction under the *fengshui* influence, even regardless of their reliability, are very few indeed, and this paucity itself comes to support the major point which I have so far developed: theoretically,

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491 A passage from the prefectural gazetteer of Huzhou is quoted in the *Zhejiang Tongzhi*, (vol. 23: "Chengchi," A: "Huzhoufu") stating that Guo Pu once intended to move the prefectural office eastward, and it was his daughter who, expert in *fengshui* as well, proposed successfully that he should not do so.

as many geomantic documents advocate, *fengshui* should have operated in man-made construction of all kinds, and continuously at each stage of the planning or growing processes right down the scale - from the settlement as a whole to all individual buildings; yet in practice, it functioned, as the actual guidelines, less actively in the construction of a regional or local city than in many other architectural activities; and less often on the overall urban structure than on smaller scales of spatial arrangement in and around the city. Even if we are to avoid sweeping generalisation, it would probably be safe to insist that the physical applications of *fengshui* ideas - if any - are more likely to be found in the far south than the north. The city of Suzhou is located in between them; *fengshui* is not, as abundant evidence has shown in the preceding two sections, recorded to have been influential in the physical outcome of any urban construction projects.[492]

Freedman (1979b:318-9) has drawn a general picture of the application of *fengshui* in the Chinese social landscape:

> In fact, *feng-shui* is applicable to any unit of habitation, so that from the single house at one end of the scale to the society as a whole there is a hierarchy of nesting units each with its *feng-shui* and subject also to the *feng-shui* of all the higher units to which it belongs. That is to say, localised lineages, villages, cities, districts, and provinces have each their geomancy; it may derive from the chief place (for example, the capital of an administrative unit) or the chief building (for example, the ancestral hall of a localised lineage) of the unit in question.

The applicability of *fengshui* in the cities is indeed beyond all question. The point is rather of the manner of applications; that is, in what way should we appropriately regard *fengshui* ideas as an integral part of the urban phenomenon in imperial China?

Wright (1977:55) has noted the fact, when he refers to the experience of city building in the South before the Sui 隋 reunification, that for cities, *fengshui* "seems to figure more in the retrospective writings of later scholars than in the actual choice of site." This observation, I believe, can be extended to the second half

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492 One should also not neglect the possibility that, since the majority of the local scholar-officials were likely to have been conversant both with the *fengshui* theories and with its technical terminology, it may, at the unconscious level, have affected to various extent the process of urban constructions. A realisation of this possibility, however, does not rebut my central argument that *fengshui* exerted its influence less strongly on the building of cities as a government enterprise than on the building of tombs, houses, villages, and the like.

of the imperial era, and thus epitomises the probable historical fact that in most cases the *fengshui* of the city existed in retrospective interpretation and perception, rather than as guiding principles in actual urban construction. Such interpretations and perceptions, on the one hand facilitated the *fengshui* specialists' assessment of any existing city's geomantic conditions with regard to its security, prosperity and sometimes superiority over those in its surrounding areas; and, on the other hand, provided the residents of the city with new schematic ingredients for them to construct a metaphysical conception of the city and thus to maintain in them a sense of psycho-spiritual balance. I have shown in the preceding two sections how *fengshui* ideas were employed in the interpretations and perceptions of the city of Suzhou, they seldom being contained in the official history of the region.

It should also be emphasised that *fengshui* encompasses merely *a* set of cosmological ideas elaborated by drawing various sources from ancient texts, which matured probably during the Han period, rather than *the* Chinese system, as Meyer (1991:41) remarks (probably off-handedly), which *ipso facto* would encompass all kinds of cosmological conceptions found in ancient or traditional architectural activities in China. Here, Feuchtwang's (1974:174) warning is most appropriate:

> Many other instances of the occurrence of feng-shui symbols in other contexts could be collected. It is wrong in fact to describe them as symbols coming from the feng-shui scheme specifically. Their incidence in a multitude of contexts shows the prevalence of concepts like the Five Elements and colours, Yin and Yang, and the Pa Kua [i.e. Bagua], and the symbolisation of heaven and earth, the seasons and the four quarters, as independent facets of a widely accepted cosmology. The feng-shui scheme should therefore be understood as a point in the development of Chinese metaphysical thought around which such concepts and symbols have clustered and been arranged.

It would therefore be misleading to categorise under the title of *fengshui* either various modes of archaic cosmological symbolism or the canonical rituals and the imperial ideology of city building. Other cosmological or metaphysical conceptions of cities found in local customs of later imperial times should also be carefully distinguished from *fengshui*, even though they might occasionally have been expressed in certain *fengshui* terms or absorbed a few of its various notions. If there was an all-encompassing cosmology, it was then part of the enduring world view of the Chinese people, under the sway of which various modes of applicational systems - including *fengshui* - coexisted. Thus, some imperial scholars might have described some cities by using terms that were closer, or even identical, to those

employed in *fengshui* theories, but it does not necessarily mean that these scholars' perception of the cities was influenced by *fengshui* ideas; and the matter should probably be turned the other way round: a description of this kind actually reflected the persistent world view with which *fengshui* ideas, and hence most of its terms, were largely in accordance.[493] After all, most cosmological terms were borrowed into the *fengshui* elaboration, and not in its exclusive use.

7.5 *FENGSHUI* AND THE CITY

In sections 7.2 and 7.3, I have demonstrated that, at least from the Southern Song period onward, the city of Suzhou at its urban level was inextricably involved with diverse *fengshui* ideas. There is however no evidence of *fengshui* influence on any construction works that would have had significant impact on the overall form and spatial pattern of the city. Apart from the event of the mid-twelfth century when Hu Shunshen recommended the reopening of She Gate in the light of his reading of the geomantic situation of the siting of the city, which proved to be a vain attempt, all the records of *fengshui* application to the city in later periods are characteristic of retrospective interpretation.[494] These cases reflect that not only the competing versions of expert *fengshui* ideas, but also the notions of the elite and the geomantic interpretations at popular level, all dwell on what Freedman (1979a:191) calls "a central theme in Chinese metaphysics - man's place in nature and the universe," and share the fundamental view of being in tune with the universe. These cases also show that in the course of time these different ideas, notions and interpretations drew elements from each other to such an extent that none of them can be treated entirely on its own. Yet incongruity between them is

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493 Freedman (1974:39) has tackled a similar issue with somewhat different intent:

> At first sight, the baroque elaboration of popular feng-shui may seem to contrast sharply with the austere religious imagination of the elite; but on closer inspection it becomes evident that both sets of beliefs are products of the same assumptions and manipulate versions of the same concepts.

494 It is worth noting that, although the city during the imperial period was time and again interpreted in *fengshui* terms, no evidence of elaboration of this kind is found in explicit relation to the recorded cosmological symbolism in the initial construction of the Wu capital in the late sixth century B.C. (See Chapter Two) It is hard to tell whether the reason for the absence of such a connection is that the *fengshui* specialists of later periods may have had considerable doubts as to this particular symbolism portending good fortunes, for the state of Wu was destroyed by Yue within half of a century after the construction of its capital; or that, since this symbolism emphasised the cosmic centrality of the city and expressed the ambition of the king of Wu to seek hegemony over the whole of China, no one dared to associate his *fengshui* ideas with it.

obvious and significant, and consequently *fengshui* practice in building activities in and around the city could not but operate in a very complicated situation.

I have also argued in section 7.4 that, since the ambivalent attitude towards *fengshui* and other popular "superstitions" was built into Chinese administration and the outlook of civil servants, and since the local government body and the social structures of the city did not form a context that would foster *fengshui* practices, the inapplicability of its ideas to the physical construction of the city is hardly surprising. That is not to say, however, that no building activities in the city ever fell under *fengshui* influence. In fact, the phrase *buju* 卜居 (lit. "choose and divine a dwelling-place") and *buzhai* 卜宅 (lit. "choose and divine a house") are frequently used in numerous local documents referring to gentry families' choice of the site of their urban residence. Although the character *bu* in these contexts may long have become a formal term only denoting "choose" and been detached from its ancient meaning of fortune-telling, we cannot entirely rule out the geomantic implications of these phrases. Constructions in and around the city by local lineages, guilds, and the like were also inclined to be influenced by *fengshui* ideas. A notable example, the building of honorific gateways (*fangbiao* 坊表) during the late imperial period, can be cited from Gu Zhentao's statement in his *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 12: "Fangbiao"):

> The honorific gateways [in praise] of the sons of filial piety and the women of chastity and filial piety, . . . [their builders] being so often deluded with *fengshui* [requirements] [*huo yu fengshui* 惑於風水], were either built into the walls [of houses] or covered with a roof; there were also many which collapsed and were abandoned. Their fundamental significance of public commendation has utterly been lost.

It should not be too unreasonable to surmise that other kinds of building activities at the level of local corporate groups were in a similar situation.

What, then, were the situations of building activities that fell in between these two levels; or, what would have happened, for instance, to an operation of the non-government enterprises with regard to the collective interests of the urban residents, in which *fengshui* ideas were involved? I would like to cite an informative and well documented case, the building of Wannian 萬年 (lit. "ten thousand years") Bridge across the city moat outside Xu Gate, to answer this question and to illustrate how *fengshui* may usually have exerted its influence on building activities in an urban milieu. The first record of it appears in a passage

contained in the prefectural gazetteer compiled in the second half of the Kangxi 康熙 reign-period (1662-1722), which is quoted in the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi* (vol. 148: "Zaji," no. 5):

> Five of the prefectural city gates each has a guarded water passage and a bridge straddling across the city moat, facilitating traffic. Only Xu Gate does not. It has been said that it faces Zuoe 岝崿 Hill which looks like a lion in form.[495] Building a bridge [there] is not suitable, for it would evoke the malicious influences [*zhengning zhi shi* 猙獰之勢] from the hill [to the city]. . . . During the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign-period [1522-1566], there were those who went against [the interest of] the multitude and built a bridge [there]. [Consequently,] the city suffered repeated natural disaster and disturbances by Japanese pirates. Later, the residents demolished it.

It is not certain whether the story of the building and the subsequent demolition of the bridge in the sixteenth century is a historical fact, but the city maps contained both in the *Gusu Zhi*, completed in 1506, and in the *Wuzhong Shuili Quanshu*, written in the 1630s - i.e. the maps produced both before and after this event - show that among the six gates of the city, Xu Gate was the only one that did not have a nearby bridge across the moat.

The passage continues by narrating the following event of the early Qing, likewise centred on an attempt at constructing a bridge at this location:

> In the twenty-eighth year of the Kangxi reign-period [i.e. 1689], Shen Zaikuan 沈在寬 from Wujiang [county] suddenly proposed to build the bridge and solicited contributions from all sides. Those who sought to make profit [from it] rushed to chime in with him.[496] Just as the timbers for the bridge were ready, fire spread over the area around Nanhao 南濠 [the city moat between Chang Gate and Xu Gate] and burnt down a thousand houses. Within a few days, fire broke out repeatedly. The specialist in landforms, Xu Changshi 徐昌時, petitioned the interested parties, explaining in detail the topographical forms and influences [of this area] in an irrefutable way: "The city moat is over thirty *zhang* [approx. 100m] in width; [consequently] the bridge must be built extremely high and steep so that grain barges can pass through. Within the city walls, store-houses and prisons are all located in the south-east, and should one stand on the bridge, the situation here could be spied from outside the city walls. This would run counter to the principles of establishing strategic security." Those

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495 The name of the hill, literally meaning "precipitous," was gained from its particular configuration. For the same reason, it was also known as Lion Hill (Shizi Shan 獅子山).

496 This statement seems to suggest that this enterprise was profitable, probably as a consquence of the charging of tolls.

> who were building the bridge hated it [i.e. Xu Changshi's exposition], and led the way with many people to smash his house. The police inspector heard of this [and reported it?]. The provincial authority charged its subordinate department with making inquiries and arrests, and as usual was about to punish the major criminals so as to put an end to [any similar criminal acts in] the future.

The building of this bridge was clearly a private project. It was initiated and financed entirely by individuals and independent parties; profits were expected to be gained from it. Probably not a few people voiced their opposition to this project, for there would otherwise have been no need for its supporters to attack the residence of Xu Changshi, whose *fengshui* interpretation[497] must have been seen as effectively inciting widespread objections to the project. Only when the situation eventually developed into cases of civil litigation, and even criminal acts, did active intervention from the local government occur. The current provincial governor then summoned the magistrates of Wu and Changzhou counties for their opinions, and they proposed five provisions, the most important two being that charges against those who damaged Xu Changshi's house should not be pressed, and that it was not appropriate to build the bridge. The dispute was finally settled when the governor ordered that the building materials be transported to the Wu county school for the repair of its buildings, and the attempt to build the bridge dropped. The government's indifference to the project is clear, but we are not certain whether the reason for the local government's decision to stop the project was that contemporary officials were influenced by *fengshui* ideas, or, more probably, that tension between the two conflicting sides was so strong that building the bridge at that time had become a highly sensitive or even inflammatory issue - after all, the government did not act until fights broke out. Nevertheless, as we shall see presently below, these officials and their successors in the following fifty years were criticised by later scholars for their being "deluded" into believing in *fengshui* and not pursuing this enterprise.

The bridge was eventually built in 1740 by the incumbent prefect Wang Dexin 汪德馨, at the cost of ten thousand six hundred taels of silver, all coming from private donations. The construction started on the second day of the fourth month and was completed in the same year on the first day of the eleventh month. The bridge measured slightly over one hundred metres in length, seven and a half

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497 Ironically, Xu Changshi's exposition does not appear to have a particularly strong bearing on *fengshui* theories, and is certainly sharply different from the one concerning the form of Zuoe Hill cited earlier above.

metres in width and about eleven metres in height. These figures are all recorded in the memoir written by Xu Shilin 徐士林, the provincial governor in that same year, and are also contained in the 1883 *Suzhoufu Zhi.* (Vol 33: "Jinliang," no. 1: "Wannian Qiao") Figure 7-4 is a picture of the bridge drawn by Xu Yang in his *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* produced in 1759. In his memoir, Xu Shilin also describes how troublesome it was before the bridge was constructed, for over ten thousand people had to wait to be ferried across the moat every day. He then provides us with a valuable record of two different explanations of the reasons for the absence of a bridge outside Xu Gate, which he learned from the local records and from the locals whom he interviewed in person:

> One explanation is that in the preceding dynasty there was a huge plate-girder bridge [*jubanqiao* 巨板橋],[498] but it was destroyed a long time ago. The people were afraid of the heavy labour [of rebuilding it], and thus this task remained unaccomplished. Another explanation is that the ferrymen, secretly wanting to retain it [i.e. their ferry job], passed their intention off as the sayings of the specialists in landforms. They claimed that [building a bridge here] would be detrimental to [the interests of] the gentry and officials, and led the latter to provoke [fear of it] in each other. [The latter] did not investigate this but all alike believed it. This state of affairs has carried on and on until today. If we study this [*fengshui* idea] carefully, then [we know that it] took the lie of Zuoe Hill as being hideous and thus emanating noxious breaths [*shaqi* 煞氣]; [that] fortunately the water [of the city moat] was restraining them; [and that] a bridge would invite the noxiousness straight into the city, which would be ominous in every way. Alas! This is a delusion as well.[499]

The first version does not concern *fengshui* at all, and, to some extent, is apparently preferred by Xu Shilin. It reveals that the lack of success in building the bridge before 1740 may not have been the outcome of opposition from any geomantic point of view. The second version attributes such a failure to the *fengshui* influence. But the blame on the ferrymen for concocting the *fengshui* interpretation in the first place might at first glance seem very unfair on them. By reference to the standard *fengshui* discourse, it is not difficult to find that this interpretation of the

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498 What Wang Shilin refers to here as the "plate girder bridge," having temporarily existed in the Ming, could have been the same one that was allegedly built in the period between 1522-1566.

499 It is worth noting that, although both this record and the one made in the Kangxi reign-period are contained in the local gazetteers, the former is arranged in one of the last sections entitled "Miscellaneous Notes," and may therefore not have been regarded by the compilers as a piece of reliable information; the latter, by contrast, is contained in the interlinear note in the entry "Wannian Bridge" in the section entitled "Bridges," which is one of the sections dealing with official history.

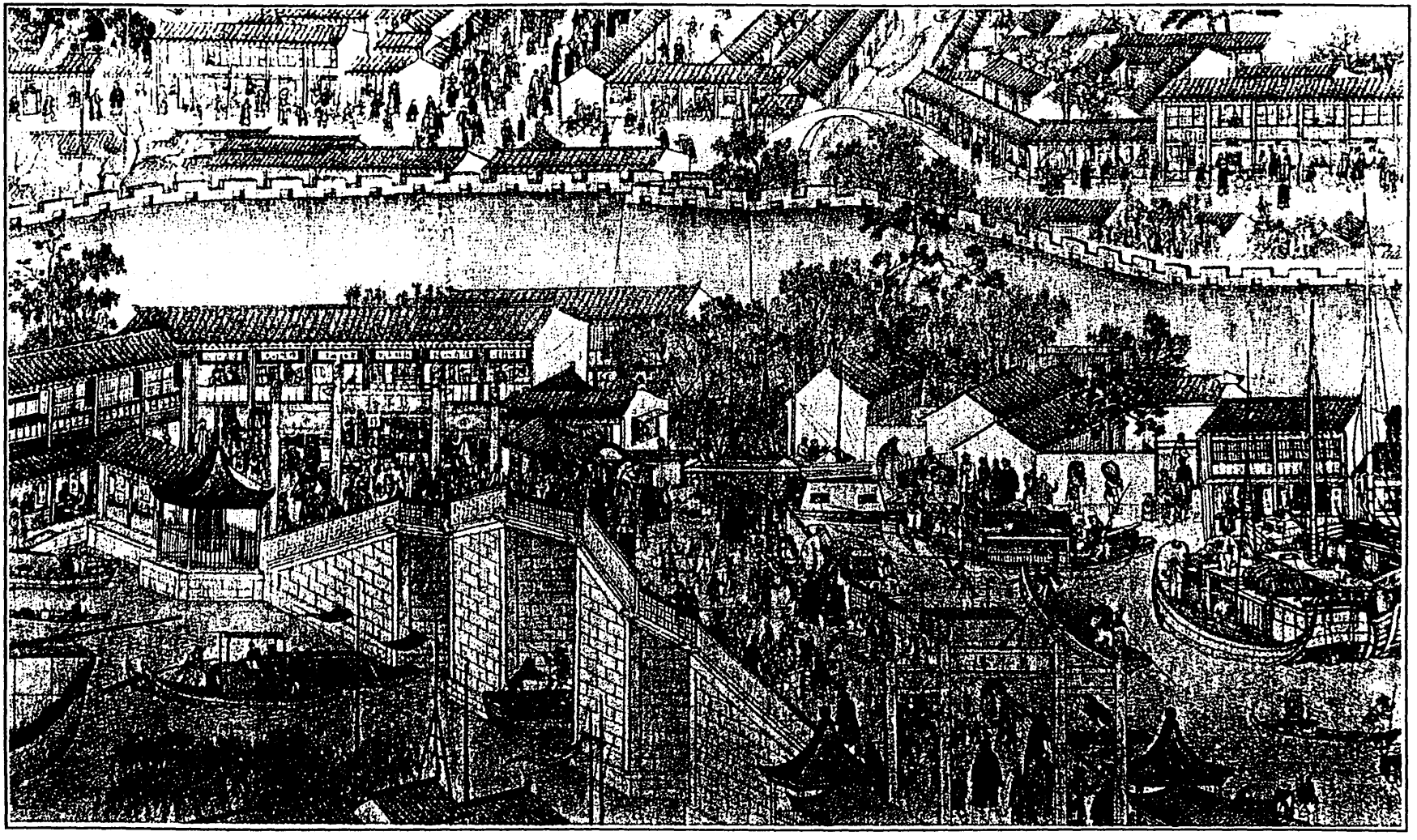

Figure 7-4 Section of the 1759 scroll *Shengshi Zisheng Tu* depicting Wannian Bridge across the city moat outside Xu Gate. Adapted from LB-ZLB-SDBW 1986:plate 49.

geomantic situation around the site where the bridge was intended to be built is well constructed. For instance, in the *Zang Shu*, one of the classics of *fengshui* theories, we read: "The breaths will disperse when carried by the wind, and will stop when reaching the edge of the water." This statement applies to the breaths of both benign and malignant nature. The water of the city moat was therefore seen as stopping the noxious breaths emanated from Zuoe Hill, whereas a bridge would help them flow into the city. It is unlikely that such an expert view could have originated from the ferrymen, although they might naturally have taken it afterwards as a convenient weapon in their struggle to retain their means of livelihood. Nevertheless, this second version also suggests that other factors, both social and economic, were, or at least were believed to be, at work on this matter.

Resistance to the pursuit of this enterprise was undoubtedly further fuelled by the *fengshui* interpretations. It is true that in traditional Chinese society, conflicts between parties of different interests often took place in the name of *fengshui*. Freedman (1979b:322) has brought to our attention the fact that for the Chinese, good fortune was a quantum and one's neighbour's increment was one's own decrement. He then writes:

> For happiness and prosperity are not limitless; they form a fixed fund from which each man must strive to draw for himself the maximum at the expense of others. It is for this reason that *feng-shui* is to be seen as an instrument of competition . . . (op.cit. 329)

Competitions of this kind are indeed abundantly evidenced in both pre-modern literature and modern scholarship.[500] Some of them have resulted in physical

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500 Freedman (1979b:319) holds that "between coordinate units - between houses in one village, between villages, between towns, and so on - there may be rivalry issuing in geomantic quarrels, one side accusing the other of harming its *feng-shui* and taking countermeasures, . . . But geomancy may also be involved in the relations between entities at different levels of the hierarchy, such that a capital city may harm one of the nearby villages in its jurisdiction." In principle, I agree with Freedman. Where cities are concerned, however, we may have to be more cautious about it. This point is best illustrated in the Quanzhou 泉州 case cited by Freedman himself, which has also been relished by so many anthropologists either before or after him: the prefectural city of Quanzhou, like a carp in shape, was said to have erected two pagodas to foil its netlike neighbouring city. (See de Groot 1897:977) To be sure, the story is a later invented myth, not a historical fact - the two pagodas were first built in 865 and 916 respectively, prior to the initial construction of the city walls in the 940s or 950s; and it was probably not until the Yuan period (1279-1368) that the city, after centuries of expansion, assumed the form of a carp. But our point centres on the hierarchical relationship between the city of Quanzhou and its neighbouring city referred to in the story, the capital city of Yongchun 永春 county, a county under the jurisdiction of

settlement; some have remained as unmaterialised ideas; and some have been presented merely in retrospective interpretations. My concern here is precisely with the workings of a similar such competition in the urban milieu around that same city gate of Suzhou. We should first note that what happened around the building of a bridge at Xu Gate was not between parties of different geomantic interests, but apparently between those who paid attention to the *fengshui* effects of this project and those who did not. Thus the point at issue was neither which of the rival *fengshui* interpretations was more acceptable nor whether one party's action for its own *fengshui* benefit would impair others' geomantic situations, but whether any particular *fengshui* interpretation in opposition to the project in this specific context was convincing or should be considered at all.

One would probably rightly expect that *fengshui* ideas involved in the disputes of this kind were likely to lead to effective actions and to bring about concrete physical results - either positive or negative - in the contexts of local corporate entities, i.e. families, clans or professional and native-place associations.[501] Yet the area around Xu Gate formed an urban milieu where the population was made up of residents who were heterogeneous in terms of genealogy, occupation, class and native-place identity. Neither the consensus nor the collective will of those who objected to the project was sufficiently strong to put their *fengshui* argument into physical effect. (See section 7.4) It was therefore not impossible that, even with the *fengshui* opposition at work, the construction of the bridge as a private enterprise might have been accomplished earlier than 1740 if the matter had not deteriorated into a riot in the 1689 case; or if (in other cases) sufficient funding had been available, not only for the acquisition of building materials, but also for recompensing the builders adequately so that their heavy labour could be offset; or

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Quanzhou prefecture. In other words, Yongchun was a city administratively subordinate to Quanzhou. Since the geomantic fate of the territory, a given administrative unit, was for the Chinese held to derive from the site and form of its capital, Yongchun's fortune was determined by the *fengshui* situation of its county city, whereas Quanzhou's fortune - including of course that of Yongchun - was determined by the *fengshui* situation of its prefectural city. Thus in theory at least, interpretations of taking measures to counter any harmful influences from neighbouring cities could only occur down the hierarchical levels, not the other way round.

501 There is some written evidence of this in the Suzhou area. Let me cite one example. Xu Qi 許起 (*c.* 1828-?), a Changzhou scholar in the late Qing, records in the early 1880s that his grandfather's grandfather paid a high price for a piece of land to the south of the market town of Fuli 甫里 (i.e. the town of Luzhi 甫直, 25km to the south-east of the city of Suzhou) and intended to build on it a family mourning hall (*bingshe* 丙舍). However, this attempt did not succeed in the face of opposition from the neighbouring village, the inhabitants of the latter being "deluded with *fengshui* teachings." (*Shanhushe Diaotan Zhaichao*: "Shengkuang Shi")

if, indeed, there was explicit government support of the project. The success of the effort in 1740 seems to have verified this analysis.

How was this enterprise thought of by the local scholars (and, to some extent, possibly by commoners as well) of later periods? Gu Gongxie, for example, writes in 1785 a version of story current in his time and makes a few personal comments on it:

> Outside Xu Gate of the [city of the] Suzhou prefecture, there was once a drawbridge. Tradition has it that, during the Jiajing reign-period [1522-1566], Yan Song 嚴嵩 [1480-1567],[502] fond of its white stones, moved it to Jiangxi. I once passed by Fenyi 分宜,[503] and saw a bridge [there]. [It was made of] purple stones, not white stones. For over two hundred years from then on, those who entered into government office in Suzhou were deluded with *fengshui* ideas which claimed that the bridge would connect the noxious breaths from the mountains to the west, and disasters of the dikes of Lake [Tai] bursting were bound to happen. [Yet] there were those people, coming and going [at this point], who were drowned when the ferry boat was capsized. Many schemed to build a bridge, but failed repeatedly. It was not until the fifth year of the Qianlong 乾隆 reign-period [i.e. 1740] that the prefect, His Honour Wang Dexin, having cogently refuted the heresies, generously took charge [of the project] by himself. Within a year, the task was accomplished. The bridge was named Wannian [lit. "ten thousand years"]; the virtue of His Honour, together with this bridge, will surely be everlasting and immortal. (XXZ, vol. B: "Wannian Qiao")

Fifty years later, Gu Zhentao also devoted a passage to this event and its historic background in his *Wumen Biaoyin* (vol. 7), which reads similar to that of Gu Gongxie's, but with a lightly different wording.[504] For these two scholars, and

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502 At that time, Yan Song was a Great Mentor in the Ming court, notorious for his manipulation of state affairs and embezzlement of army provisions.

503 Fenyi is located in the west of Jiangxi.

504 Gu Zhentao does not imply a denial of the story that Yan Song moved the bridge away to Jiangxi. He also indicates that the memorial gateway built in front of the bridge (see Figure 7-3), *qiaofang* 橋坊, as he calls it, was the first of this kind in the Suzhou area. But the most interesting difference between the accounts by these two scholars is that, whereas Gu Gongxie only criticises the government officials' being deluded with *fengshui*, Gu Zhentao explicitly blames both the officials and the commoners on that same ground. This difference, by reference to the other parts of their books, seems to suggest varied levels at which the two scholars regarded *fengshui* as justifiable. It is possible that, for the former, *fengshui* may have been part of the "popular superstitions" and thus (perhaps condescendingly) there was held to be no need to criticise the common people for their belief; for the latter, it was the social contexts, not any categorisation of people, that determined whether *fengshui* practice should be denounced - I have noted earlier that he records approvingly a case of the *fengshui* of burial but scorns geomantic concerns in the building of the honorific gateways. Yet one thing is certain: both scholars share the view

possibly also for the many others from whom they extracted their versions of the story, only Yan Song and the officials who let themselves be "deluded" with *fengshui* were to blame for the absence of a bridge at this location before 1740; other social and economic factors were entirely negligible. The story of Yan Song in connection with the bridge in Ming time was, as Gu Gongxie has implied, a fabrication. Yet by equating those officials' inaction in the matter of building the bridge, allegedly because of *fengshui* influence, to Yan Song's despicable, selfish deeds, the criticism became particularly harsh indeed. In the minds of Gu Gongxie and Gu Zhentao, *fengshui* thoughts themselves were probably tolerable; it was the social context that mattered. Government officials should never allow such "superstitious" ideas to interfere with any enterprise that was meant to function to the benefit of the public.

7.6 CONCLUSION

I have discussed a great deal of the particular case of the building of Wannian Bridge. Now let me step back to summarise the main points developed thus far. I have argued that, because of the collective ambivalent attitudes of the imperial scholar-officials towards *fengshui*, and because of the social context of the local government and urban society, city constructions as part of the local administration[505] seldom fell under geomantic influences. In other words, at the level of government building projects, *fengshui* influence was kept to a minimum. On the other hand, *fengshui* was often applied to various features of the city in the form of retrospective interpretations rather than of guides for their construction. Scholar-officials might occasionally borrow *fengshui* ideas in their descriptions of the city, but they often preferred a cautious wording in doing so. The reader may remember that Fei Chun, the provincial governor in 1795, wrote a memoir (*Chongjun Suzhou Chenghe Ji*) recording the successful project of city canal-dredging in that same year. The memoir contains the following passage eulogising the conditions of the newly dredged water courses in the city:

> Because of the vastness and grandness (*pangbo weiqi* 旁魄蔚跂) of the city of Suzhou, having waters attached to it makes [the city] fertile and smooth (*gaorun* 膏潤). [They] immerse with one

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that *fengshui* should be condemned if it interferes with government enterprises or any other projects that are supposed to function to the interest of the public.

505 From the mid-nineteenth century onward, there were signs of active participation of the local gentry and professional associations in the management of the city affairs, but the local government's role in urban construction works remained pre-dominant.

> another in the arteries and veins, pouring water into what is highly valued; [they] develop resourcefully along their natural courses, assisting the running of the traffic. [It is] like the circulation of the blood and breath (*yingwei* 營衛) in a human body,[506] removing what is stagnant and keeping them flowing freely; [working in this way,] nothing would not be pleasantly smooth, and nothing would not be peacefully relaxed. Here [I] am certainly not intending to consult the opinion of the specialists in landforms, but their principles are believable indeed.

Fei Chun talks eloquently about the benefit of waters to the city in *fengshui* terms, but at the end explicitly dissociates himself from the art of *fengshui*. It is unlikely that he would have allowed *fengshui* practice to get in the way of his government actions.

At the level of building activities of local corporate groups, such as families, lineages, and native-place and professional associations, *fengshui* influences on their physical results in the city were supposedly strong, even though written evidence of this is not particularly rich.[507] More complex and volatile situations often happened to those construction projects that fell between the level of local corporate groups and the level of local government. They were the ones around which the two domains intertwined. The building of Wannian Bridge was such a case in which a plethora of social, economic and psychological factors - including *fengshui* - were at work on the whole process of construction, from the initial scheme to its aftermath, whereas the determining role in its eventual outcome was played by active intervention from the local officials. The history of this project and all the elaborate stories evolved around it are not only informative of the case itself, but also suggestive of other cases at the highest and lowest levels. It is for this reason that I have paid special attention to this case.

I conclude this chapter by referring to one of Freedman's (1979b:318-9) observations on the hierarchical system of *fengshui* application:

> In fact, *feng-shui* is applicable to any unit of habitation, so that from the single house at one end of the scale to the society as a whole there is a hierarchy of nesting units each with its *feng-shui*

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506 Note that Hu Shunshen used this phrase in his assessment of the *fengshui* situation of the city of Suzhou. (See section 7.2)

507 It should be noted that the majority of the records of this kind are contained in the documents produced in the Ming and Qing periods, which suggests proliferation of *fengshui* practice in the city in the late imperial era. This may have something to do with the medieval urban revolution which freed private urban building activities from previously strict government control. (See section 3.2.2)

> and subject also to the *feng-shui* of all the higher units to which it belongs. That is to say, localised lineages, villages, cities, districts, and provinces have each their geomancy; it may derive from the chief place (for example, the capital of an administrative unit) or the chief building (for example, the ancestral hall of a localised lineage) of the unit in question.

In terms of *fengshui* interpretation, Freedman's point holds indeed. I have shown that interpretations may have taken the form of contemporary assessment of the geomantic situation of a given setting, or of advice on some particular building projects that would hopefully produce favourable geomantic effects, or of objection to them, they being seen as a threat to the geomantic conditions of a certain area, or simply of retrospective views on the geomantic quality of a settlement.

In terms of *fengshui* influence on building activities where it was supposed to produce conspicuous physical effects, however, unquestioningly following this line of reasoning would be far too simplistic an assessment. Basing myself on the evidence presented in this chapter, it is my *a priori* hypothesis that both the general ambivalent stance of the scholar-officials towards *fengshui*, and, more importantly, the particular social and ideological context of walled cities on which local governments were founded, may effectively have restrained the potential role that *fengshui* would possibly have played in building activities at an urban level. The hierarchy of imperial administration and the hierarchy of lineage (and lineage-like association) did not dwell on the same plane, and, in its political, social and psychological nature, the city, being a local administrative centre, was profoundly different from houses and villages. By demonstrating the case of the building of Wannian Bridge, I then suggest that *fengshui* influences on the physical outcome of construction projects at the level of local corporate groups were probably strong; more complex and volatile situations are likely to have existed in the projects that fell between this lower level and the level of local governmental duties.

CONCLUSION

No analysis of and inquiry into China's urban history can ever be closed. This is especially the case with the present study: it does not provide a detailed, all-encompassing historiography of the city of Suzhou; instead, by taking the history of the city as a particular case, it aims at addressing a number of important characteristics of urban transformation in pre-modern China, upon which an appropriate historical approach to studies of the construction and development of Chinese cities can be based. Yet any text must be concluded within a set of particular limitations. For this reason, this "Conclusion" only marks a momentary pause in the process of study; it is a place both for a summary of the points made in the main text and, more importantly, for a discussion of the existing problems and of some new topics that will hopefully reward further studies of the urban history of China. This two-fold purpose of the conclusion is directly reflected in its structure. In order to render this conclusion coherent and succinct, I do not strictly follow the sequential order of the chapters of this thesis in pursuit both of these two tasks.

THE CITY IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PRE-MODERN CHINA

My inquiry into the formation and transformation of the city of Suzhou begins at the inception of its history in 514 B.C. when the city was first built as the state capital of Wu. I have indicated that, because of the paucity of archaeological evidence and of the lack of even literary evidence contemporaneous of the time of the city's building, the information we presently have about the earliest city, mainly extracted from texts of the Eastern Han, can hardly be regarded with any certainty as to what really happened in the late sixth century B.C. The available history of this earliest building of the city may well be interpreted as a construct devised by the authors of Eastern Han documents to express the historical struggle for survival between the states of Wu and Yue.

Two related features of this construct are of important relevance to the present study. One is the physical aspect of the city. The accounts of this feature may have been made on the basis of what had been transmitted, either textually or orally, or both, to these authors, and of their own perceptions of the city in their time. Another, and probably more central, feature is the idea of the city having been

built as a cosmic centre. This is a symbolic theme that had most probably combined elements drawn both from the local traditions and the culture of Central China as it had evolved from as early as Shang times on the one hand, and involved the cosmological synthesis of the Han on the other. Yet for a study of urban history, people's conception of a city is often no less important than its physical reality. In fact, the authenticity of this symbolic theme of the earliest construction of the city was never challenged in subsequent dynastic periods; rather, it proves to have being viewed later as a source of historical authority and continued to inform the city's further development. It is for this reason that I have maintained a positive attitude in my interpretation of it.

There is no doubt that constructing city walls and founding a capital city were described as having been taken by the rulers of the states of Wu and Yue as the first, and crucial, step towards an idealised order - an order of both social and cosmic significance. The cosmic scheme is enunciated by the author of the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* as realised in two principal measures. One is that the builder of the Wu capital, Wu Zixu, constructed the great city walls by "following the forms manifested in Heaven and the process taking place on Earth." The eight land gates of the city were built to symbolise the eight winds from Heaven, and the eight water gates to imitate the eight intelligent attributes of Earth. In this manner, the city can be interpreted as having condensed and represented the universe. The other measure is the symbolic correspondence between two important, individual gates, namely Chang Gate symbolising the Gate of Heaven in the north-west, and She Gate symbolising the Gate of Earth in the south-east. The directional attributes of this symbolism must have been closely associated with some mythical accounts of an ancient cosmological idea that derived from direct observation of the topographical and celestial phenomena of the geographical location in China. Similar measures of a cosmic scheme are also found in the same document's account of the construction of the Yue capital.

However, in interpreting any cosmological symbolism of the building of cities or other kinds of human settlements, it seems of particular importance to caution against neglecting a fundamental point that sets the Chinese experience apart from that of many other ancient civilisations; that is, the distinctive notion of Chinese cosmogony. For Eliade, (1959) who tries to bring out the general pattern of the specific characteristics of the religious experience, activities of settling and building represent "the religious moment" in traditional societies, one that "implies the cosmogonic moment." (Op.cit. 30) An unknown and unoccupied territory, Eliade

(op.cit. 31) claims, must be consecrated so as to become an inhabited one, a cosmos. This symbolic transformation is, for Eliade, to be seen as through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony, a process of being "created," because every creation has a paradigmatic model - the creation of the universe by the gods.

Although the interpretation of the transformation of a territory into a cosmos through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony may, to some extent, be applicable to Chinese experience as well, it can hardly be seen as an act of "re-creation," since for the ancient Chinese, the world and its myriad things existed, not because they were created by the gods, as Eliade (op.cit. 165) has generalised for the "archaic societies;" they were simply uncreated. The world and man were regarded as constituting the central features of a spontaneously self-generating cosmos having no creator, god, ultimate cause, or will external to itself. This distinctive trait of Chinese cosmology and cosmogony, most influential in the ancient Chinese world view, has been developed throughout subsequent history without any fundamental modification other than its refinement and more detailed articulation. There was indeed a paradigmatic model for the building of the city; but it was not "the creation of the universe by the gods." What the builders strove for was to construct a city, the form of which could be believed as both imitating the form of the universe and representing the centre of the cosmos. By doing so, it was hoped that an ideal order would be established within the city and the state, which would co-ordinate the Way of Heaven and Earth - jointly constituting the eternal Way of the cosmos.

The idea of the city as a cosmic centre lost its relevance to its occupants once the state of Wu was destroyed by Yue in 473 B.C. This was particularly so from the Qin unification in 221 B.C. onwards, when China became a centralised empire administered by an appointed bureaucracy of literati, and the system of cities underwent profound changes. A city, which in the case of its previously having been a state capital could have represented a self-contained political power struggling for survival against others, became by this time principally an instrument of the imperial government. Consequently, a fundamental distinction evolved between the imperial capital and regional or local cities: any cosmological symbolism was only overtly retained, and perpetuated, in the building of the former as the cosmic pivot of the four quarters, at which the Son of Heaven resided. On the other hand, a city was not a corporate entity of its own that could be legally separated from its surrounding countryside, but functioned as a centre of imperial administration, its jurisdiction being over a regional area which was largely rural and in which the

city was a part. Thus from the beginning of the imperial era, the city in China did not show the traits of cities in dual societies, and there existed what we may loosely call "an urban-rural continuum."

However, the *raison d'être* of the cities' invariably being centres of the imperial administration should not lead to the *a priori* assumption that they were no more than government offices writ large, that they were uniform in plan, and that they lasted essentially unchanged for two millennia. Many cities were also prominent centres of production, trade and commerce. Their economic and administrative functions demanded the support of each other at a certain stage of development. Given the vastness of the Chinese empire, their form, spatial structure, and urban life were in fact markedly differentiated from region to region, and from one particular city to another. As for the planning principles, the cities, especially those in the economically more advanced areas, experienced profound institutional changes in time. Most notable transformations firstly were brought about by the medieval urban revolution that took place between the second half of the eighth century and the twelfth century. They were most characterised by the breakdown of the government controlled walled-ward system of residential and market quarters in the city, by the freer street plan in which trade and commerce could be conducted anywhere within the city or its outlying suburbs, and by the rapid expansion of particular walled cities and the commercial spill-out of their gates. During the late imperial period, another wave of urban transformations occurred. Further relaxation of government control and the intensification of market economy gave rise to the functional partitioning of urban space in large cities, the rapid growth of commercial suburbs, and the integration of capital cities and numerous market towns into a single hierarchical system of information, production and distribution.

The city of Suzhou in the imperial era was an important one of such cities. For the existence of this city, as for that of all others to which the term "city" can be applied, the city walls constituted, or at least should have constituted, a basic prerequisite. This fact is most explicitly revealed in the semantic feature of the Chinese ideograph *cheng* 城 denoting both "city" and "city walls" or, as a verb, "to wall a city." Conversely, a settlement which did not house an office of imperial administration was not supposed to be enclosed by the kind of fortifications that, in both measurement and building technique, were to be seen as equivalent to city walls. Thus when the prefectural government of Suzhou was temporarily

transferred to a new site in A.D. 591, the old city had to be "emptied." The city walls and the imperial government were institutionally and conceptually inseparable - the existence of the former was required by the latter, and at the same time affirmed the presence of the latter.

The important growth of the city of Suzhou started from the time when the demographic centre of China began to shift to the Yangzi provinces, in the ninth century. The recorded history of the repeated reconstruction of the city walls dates from that same period. Yet the earliest city maps available to us date from as late as 1229; they form an invaluable source of pictorial evidence, supplemented by, but obviously more reliable than, written information, on which an examination of the transformation of the city can be based with greater certainty. By collating the city maps with literary records, I have demonstrated that, at least from 1229 onwards, the position of the city walls and thus the overall form of the city (defined by its walls) remained basically unchanged. The existing network of city canals and moats, both forming a fixed framework in which the city was embedded, must have been a crucial factor for its remarkable morphological stability. Yet this stability of the city form was paradoxically accompanied by a process of steady urban growth; the most notable feature of it was the rapid spatial expansion along the Grand Canal in the west suburbs from the fifteenth century onwards, an expansion clearly driven by trade and commerce. In a modern sense, these bustling suburbs became more "urban" than most areas enclosed by the city walls. It was only in 1860 that the prosperity of these suburban areas was disastrously brought to an end by the Taiping rebellion.

The specious contradiction between these two phenomena is most overtly epitomised by the fact that, whereas under the heavy pressure from the repeated invasions and pillages by the Japanese pirates in the 1550s, to build a new wall that would have enclosed the prosperous west suburban area was once considered by a few local government advisors, it was never materialised; more significantly, the record of this event is never included in any of the official documents - principally the gazetteers - purporting to be the proper history of the construction of the city walls of Suzhou. To explain this incongruity between the walled city and what was urban according to the modern criteria, I have put forward a tentative suggestion in two directions. On the one hand, in theory during the first half of the imperial period, and in practice from the Song dynasty onwards, there existed a distinctive trait of the Chinese city both as an open institution and fostering the development of

an urban-rural continuum. Both may jointly have generated a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for the phenomenon of the free development of prosperous suburbs. On the other hand, the symbolic meaning of the city walls appears to have been particularly strong for the scholar-officials who were indisputably responsible for any decision on the building of city walls. The walls, in their eyes, not only affirmed the presence of the imperial government and the existence of a social order, but also signified the continuation of a civilisation from the past to the future. Since it was what the city walls stood for, not necessarily what they enclosed, that gained the utmost importance in the mind of the scholar-officials, the restoration of the city walls always remained central to the local government, and any construction that would have conspicuously altered their perception of the city may not have been regarded as desirable.

The symbolism of the city walls and gates had its seemingly similar version in ancient times. I have shown that the construction of the walls of the earliest city can be interpreted as signifying the establishment and maintenance of an ideal order that could be kept in accord with the Order of the cosmos. The construction of the gates is seen as a measure both of drawing a parallel between the form of the city and the form of the universe, and of symbolising an alignment of the city with the axis of the cosmos. The essential implication of this early symbolism was therefore the building of the city as a cosmic centre, a theme that was entirely in conformity with the situations of the state of Wu which was striving for power in contest against its rival states. Under the continued socio-political conditions of imperial China, however, the emphasis of the symbolism shifted profoundly from the city's being treated as the centre of the cosmos, to the presence of the imperial government and the social order that it had established, and to the loyalty of the region to the Son of Heaven residing in the imperial capital which was the single, incontestable pivot of the four quarters.

The most marked change in the physical city of Suzhou in all the centuries from the Southern Song period to the end of the Qing is the removal of the inner walled-enclosure in the early years of the Ming, previously housing the offices of the local government. The attempt at rebuilding this structure in the early 1370s, destroyed at the time when Zhang Shicheng's army defending the city was defeated in 1367 by the Ming forces, brought about catastrophic consequences to the fortune of the prefect Wei Guan and two other reputed local poets. While the event may be seen as historically fortuitous because of the particular political conditions at that time

and the violent and over-suspicious personality of the Hongwu Emperor, it nevertheless carries some significant implications that fall well within the general political, social and cultural context of imperial Chinese history. A city was principally an instrument of the imperial government, not an autonomous, corporate entity, nor a centre of political or personal freedom. On the other hand, building activities were of strong socio-political relevance. Thus the main point, derived from the analysis of this specific event, is that there was always a tendency for interventions from the central authority in the activities of its local officials - certainly including building activities. This kind of intervention could be made in pragmatic as much as in symbolic terms.

Another prominent, physical feature of the city of Suzhou was the network of its canals. The city was characterised, probably from as early as the second half of the third century A.D. onwards, by a double system of waterways and roads. I have emphasised that, as far as the present diachronic study of the urban form and space is concerned, these canals in their development appear to be the more important in revealing how the city was transformed through history. On the basis mainly of Tang and Song literary descriptions and records of the canals and the bridges, I have suggested that, in the late Tang in the ninth century, the network of urban water traffic was probably already maturely formed, and largely determined the spatial structure of the city; I have also pointed out the possibility that what is presented on the 1229 city map, which registers the result of the contemporary large-scale restoration of the city walls and the reconstruction of many other governmental institutions after the severe damage of the city by Jurchen cavalry in 1130, may basically have been the spatial structure that continuously developed from the late Tang period. In other words, the reconstruction works in the 1220s were conducted on the basis both of the existing framework of canals and of the urban spatial pattern that was delineated by the canals. A further suggestion has been made that the formation of the network of city canals assisted the spatial arrangement of the residential and market wards before the late Tang as much as it in time helped their disintegration, and that at the same time, it was itself as much the outcome of the establishment of the physical ward system as the consequence of the collapse of this system epitomising the medieval urban spatial transformation.

The availability of a greater multitude of historic accounts of the city canals, the records of canal-dredging, and the city maps, from the late imperial period has enabled me with their help to draw some more affirmative conclusions. The data

collected from a number of historic documents tell us that during the entire Qing period, i.e. the last two hundred and sixty-eight years of the imperial era, six out of ten instances of whole-scale canal-dredging occurred in the eighteenth century alone, while five of them were concentrated within a period of thirty-eight years in the first half of that century. This is clearly in sharp contrast to the situation of its preceding dynasty, the Ming: there were only four instances of whole-scale canal-dredging during the entire two hundred and seventy-six years of this dynasty. Yet we are also informed by the city maps of both the Ming and Qing periods that precisely at the end of the first half of the eighteenth century over a quarter of the city canals were lost, as compared with the canal system at the end of the Ming, a slightly more extensive one than had existed in 1229. On the basis of this information, I have argued that the unusual frequency of the canal-dredging enterprises in the first half of the eighteenth century was part of a forced reaction of the local government to the tremendous pressure of urban growth on the city area, an urban problem that had been accumulated for two centuries and aggravated by a sharp increase in Suzhou's population in that same century.

If the geometrically regulated pattern of the water courses during the Southern Song period, gradually formed over the preceding centuries, was largely a physical outcome of strict government control over city residences and markets which co-ordinated with their development, the massive loss of the canals in the first half of the eighteenth century probably resulted from the enormous pressure on certain areas of the city that was brought about by the unprecedented upsurge of population at that time, the marked relaxation of government control and the rapid economic growth beginning from the mid-Ming onwards. In support of this argument, I have identified the areas which had experienced significant loss of canals by the mid-eighteenth century. We should bear in mind that urban space had gradually, and largely spontaneously, developed into three districts during the Ming period: the business district in the north-west (including the west suburbs), the gentry and official district in the south-west, and the district of family-based textile industry in the north-east. The majority of the areas where canals were blocked were the quarters of the business district close to Chang Gate in the north-west and part of the district of family-based textile industry adjacent to the business district. These areas were obviously economically and demographically most sensitive.

An examination of the mode of the arrangement of public urban space in the

city of Suzhou, exemplified by the miscellaneous, public use of the Daoist temple Xuanmiao Guan, has been conducted in conjunction with discussions of building form and style, and of the relationship between building compounds and social institutions, rather than with discussions of the urban structure. The reason for this choice comes from my observation that, apart from city streets, canals and bridges, public urban space in Suzhou, as in most traditional Chinese cities, principally took the form of the courtyard that was an integral part of the building compound; institutionally and conceptually, there were few public open places that can be perceived as equivalent to the city square in European cities. With an acknowledgement of the danger in attempting to answer the pseudo-question why the traditional Chinese city lacked the square as a civic centre, I have concentrated on trying to explain what were the conjunctural factors that gave rise to this particular phenomenon in the city of Suzhou, which was mostly probably representative of the general Chinese experience.

This has tentatively been approached in two perspectives. One is the socio-political relationship between the city and the countryside. Since the city was not an administrative unit itself but part of a regional area which was largely rural, Xuanmiao Guan, like all other temples located in the urban area, was certainly not regarded as a property of the city. Access to this temple and its courtyard, symbolically demarcated by its own walls, was maintained, both institutionally and psychologically by all sections of society, urban as much as rural. Its locality and spaciousness were the main determinants of its public functions. The other perspective is the distinctive Chinese concept of socialised space. I have noted that, for the Chinese, any space of a considerable size facilitating social interactions in a man-made environment had not be an independent entity of its own but to pertain to a certain institution in order to be explicable and therefore meaningful. The realisation of this kind of functional pertinence was characterised by defining the space not only nominally but also physically, so that this particular space could be distinguished both in concept and in reality from other spaces of different categories defined likewise, and that the human environments could be maintained in order. The most effective and most explicit means of physically defining an urban space was the use of walls, and the most ubiquitous and common space defined by this means was that of courtyards.

I have insisted that, in terms of architectural form and style, buildings in a traditional Chinese city can hardly be differentiated from buildings in its

surrounding countryside. Those structures that appear to be distinctively "urban," such as the city gate towers, the corner towers, the drum tower and bell tower, were in fact the combination of one- or two-storey halls with either the city walls or the high raised, wall-like platforms on which the halls stood. The architectural form and style of these halls were not at all distinguishable from those on the ground; it was the city walls and wall-like platforms that rendered these particular "urban structures," in many cases (but not always), distinct from rural buildings. On the other hand, I have argued extensively that the lack of discernible difference between the forms and styles of Chinese urban and rural buildings should be seen as indicating an absence of formal bond between building types and social institutions in Chinese architectural experience, rather than as evidence of the urban-rural continuum. This attribute of Chinese architecture was developed not only by its technological tradition, but also by the characteristic world view of the Chinese people.

The last, but certainly not the least, area of my inquiry into the formation and transformation of the city of Suzhou is the application of *fengshui* (or "Chinese geomantic") ideas to its urban development. The origins of *fengshui* as a formulated system of ideas are vague; but it seems very reasonable to assume that, though its various ingredients can be traced back to the Zhou, it only started to develop in any systematic way in Zou Yan's time in the first half of the third century B.C., and emerged as encompassing a set of elaborated cosmological thoughts not earlier than Han times. On the basis of this reasoned assumption, I have cautioned against over-stretching the evidence to classify all activities of site-choosing and symbolism of city construction in early Chinese history under the term *fengshui* or its other alternative names, and insisted that the cosmological symbolism of the construction of the city of Suzhou is not to be interpreted in *fengshui* terms. This discussion was followed by a fleeting introduction of the principles of two major *fengshui* schools from the Tang period onwards. The main concern of this study, however, has not been whether and how *fengshui* ideas sound cogent either to the traditional Chinese or to us, but has lain in the question of to what extent and in what way they were applied to the urban construction and development of the city of Suzhou in the imperial era, and how significant this approach of inquiry may prove in studies of traditional urban China.

In order to answer these questions properly, I have classified into two categories all the available literary records of *fengshui* ideas and activities that are

associated with the city at an urban level, namely (1) the *fengshui* influences on the physical construction works, either successful or unsuccessful, and (2) interpretations of the natural setting, form, and space of the city in *fengshui* terms. There is in the first category only one instance revealed in the historical records, namely the event in the mid-twelfth century of active *fengshui* advice on whether two particular city gates which had been blocked should be reopened, in a quest to change the fortune of the city and the prefecture for the better. My close analysis of this event has led to the conclusion that the eventual failure of this *fengshui* attempt was somewhat inevitable in the specific circumstances of the city and, in particular, of the prefectural government at that time, circumstances which, however, may not have been uncommon to those of other cities and local governments in imperial China. On the second category, three examples, all characteristic of retrospective interpretation or assessment of the city, have been cited and analysed. They indicate that not only the competing versions of expert *fengshui* ideas, but also the notions of the elite and the geomantic interpretations at popular level, all dwelt on a central theme in Chinese metaphysics - man's place in Nature and the universe, and share the fundamental view of seeking to be in tune with the universe. These different ideas, notions and interpretations drew elements from, but at the same time contradicted, each other to such an extent that none of them can be treated entirely on its own.

Yet in consideration of the role of *fengshui* in the history of the city of Suzhou, what really strikes us most forcefully is the lone recorded instance of its active advice on urban construction, it having been unsuccessful, in contrast to the relative multitude of its retrospective interpretations of the city. A hypothetical explanation of this phenomenon has been tried in two interlaced directions of argument: (1) the ambiguous attitudes towards *fengshui* on the part of the classically educated scholars, who collectively monopolised the government of imperial China at all levels, limited its influence on urban constructions; and, more importantly, (2) walled cities on which the regional or local governments were based, did not form the kind of social context that would have promoted the application of *fengshui* ideas to their prominent building projects. I have subsequently suggested that, theoretically, as the geomantic specialists advocate, *fengshui* should have operated in man-made environments of all kinds, continuously at each stage of the planning or growing processes and right down the scale - from a large city as a whole to all individual buildings or other constructions; yet in practice, it functioned in a regional or local city much more often as part of the

retrospective evaluation of its siting and the evolution of its form, than as the actual guidelines of construction projects at an urban level.

In order both to support this argument and further to illustrate to what extent *fengshui* ideas may have worked in the urban context of Suzhou, I have taken the issue a step further by citing in detail, briefly in conjunction with a few other instances, yet another example - the building of Wannian Bridge across the west city moat outside Xu Gate. This has then led to a tentative conclusion that, at the level of the building activities of local corporate groups, *fengshui* influences on their physical results were supposedly strong; more complex and volatile situations were often more likely to have happened to those construction projects that fell between the level of local corporate groups and the level of local government. The building of Wannian Bridge was such a case, around which the two domains intertwined. In this case, a plethora of social, economic and psychological factors - including *fengshui* - were at work on the whole process of construction, but the determining role in its eventual outcome was played by the active intervention from the local government.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Many intricate issues concerning various aspects of this particular city and its development have been indicated throughout the thesis. For reasons either of the paucity of reliable textual or pictorial materials on which to base analyses, or of their lack of direct relevance to the main topics of the present research, I have left some of them unsolved. This was not unexpected because not only of the immensity of the subject, but also of the fact that studies of Chinese urban history are still at a preliminary stage as compared to those of Western urban history. In the following, I shall not repeat these particular problems, but point to a few existing, yet important, problems that I have so far not yet pinned down - problems arising from the examination of the historic development of the city of Suzhou, but at the same time having wider implications for studies of the cities in pre-modern China in general, and discuss new and hopefully rewarding topics for the next phase of studies and beyond.

In discussing the city form and, especially, its cosmological symbolism at the time of its earliest construction in the late sixth century B.C., I have noted that the main texts used, i.e. the *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chunqiu*, are most probably from

the Eastern Han dynasty, while the subject of inquiry is around half a millennium earlier. A major problem thus arises as to how one may interpret the accounts of the building of this city that were so far removed from the time when it was actually constructed. This problem is related to not just the use of later accounts to re-construct the physical form of the city, but also to how to re-construct the way the city forms were symbolically perceived at the time of the building. To solve this problem, I have first pointed out that the accounts of the form of the city by the authors of Eastern Han documents may have derived both from what had been textually or orally transmitted to them, and from their own perceptions of the city at their own time. Then I have tried to identify what elements in the cosmological symbolism are likely to have been drawn from the local traditions developed from the time of the city's building to the Eastern Han period, or what elements are likely to have been absorbed from the culture of Central China, and called attention to the symbolism that seems characteristic of the cosmological synthesis of the Han. This choice of dealing with the problem derives from my understanding that these accounts should neither be regarded as authentic records of the event in the sixth century B.C., nor treated solely as a creation of the Eastern Han scholars. More important to the main topics of this research is the fact that the form of earliest city as depicted by these accounts, whatever pedigree they evince, was regarded as a conceptual basis for its later development.

It is for this reason that I have focused on the recorded form of the city and the symbolic scheme attributed to its construction themselves, not particularly on their historic authenticity, the problem of which is nevertheless acknowledged. Yet it should be noted that, whereas the *Yue Jue Shu* appears, in structure and content, somewhat similar to a local gazetteer, the interest of the *Wu Yue Chunqiu* is undoubtedly thematic and literary but not historical. (Lagerwey 1993:473) If the emphasis of the study were to be shifted to one of theorising concerning the city planning principles found in Eastern Han texts, an interesting, and important, question remains: with all the miscellaneous materials supposedly at their disposal, how did the authors of these two Eastern Han documents construct a history of the city's building that expresses the historical contest between Wu and Yue through cosmological readings contemporaneous of the time of writing? Any attempt at answering this question would necessitate closer comparisons between the ideas of cosmic symbolism presented in these texts and the cosmology of Han origin, particularly the Yin-Yang and Five Elements school of thought, and between the notions of the function of the city reflected in these texts and the idea of the city,

revealed in the contemporary descriptions of other old or new cities, that was an integral part of a coherent world view characteristic of the Han synthesis.

We are far from certain of the urban form and space of the city of Suzhou in the period of nearly a half of a millennium from the end of Eastern Han, if we are to assume that what is recorded in the *Yue Jue Shu* partly reflects the reality of the city at this time, to the early ninth century, this uncertainty being basically due to the paucity of any detailed information, either archaeological, written or pictorial. Our knowledge about them increases from the ninth century onwards, when the city and the prefecture started their important growth, and when various kinds of materials began to proliferate. Thus the emphasis of my examination of the city in the imperial era has been laid on its second period, i.e. from the mid-Tang to the late Qing. To avoid being over-ambitious in this study, I have paid less attention to the period from the 1860s to the early twentieth century than it assuredly deserves, because of the particular complexity of the urban situations then. But this by no means implies that this period was less important to the city's history than any other periods. On the contrary, it was a transitional period that linked the pre-modern city to its modern development. Works of sociological approaches to this period are very few, (e.g. Polachek 1975) not to mention those of architectural approaches. But how was the urban space being transformed? How were public projects conducted? What was the impact of Jesuit churches, hospitals and schools on the urban life of the locals?

Lack of archaeological materials determines that the present study has to be based mainly on written and pictorial records. A latent question then arises as to how accurate the information extracted from these materials is concerning the physical reality of the city in history. What is revealed in a text, a map or a piece of painting is a projection of its author's perception of the city, combined with his personal opinions. Which part of it, then, can be seen as reflecting the view of most of the contemporaries of the author, and which part represents the author's idiosyncratic ideas? Meticulous investigation of the social and intellectual backgrounds of the authors is therefore required. On the other hand, any given work had its intended readers, and thus carried with it perceptions, values and beliefs that were possibly common only to certain groups of people. An analysis of its content alone may not suffice for a full understanding of what the city really was. Take the textual materials for instance, the majority of which the present research has relied on being gazetteers and casual essays (*biji* 筆記), their intended readers

being principally literati who, of the same group, shared the authors' attitudes towards history, society and culture. What about the perceptions and views of the populace? Dramas and works of fiction which proliferated from the Ming onwards, and whose audience was definitely much wider than earlier writings of other kinds, therefore constitute another important source of information about the city.

The last prospective line of further study that I should point out here is associated with the main purpose of this present study. As has been indicated in the introduction of the thesis, the city of Suzhou in history should be regarded as having shared many common elements with other cities in traditional China, so that it was, like other cities, culturally Chinese. It is on this premise that the thesis has aimed, by taking the history of this city as a specific case, at addressing a number of important characteristics of city building and development in pre-modern China, upon the analysis of which an appropriate historical approach to wider studies of the construction and development of Chinese cities can be based. These characteristics include, for instance, the persistence of the conception of the city in the midst of profound transformation of its function and cosmological meaning from pre-imperial times to the imperial era - a persistence that was largely determined by a sense of deference to antiquity and tradition; the distinctive urban-rural relationship in the course of socio-economic development; the tremendous urban change over space and time within the framework of the imperial city system as an instrument of its administration; the dynamic interactions in the course of the rise and decline of the city between conscious urban planning and its natural growth; the paradoxical co-existence of the traditional idea of the timeless city physically defined by its walls, with the reality of its urban spatial expansion; the salient symbolic role of the city walls in society and architecture; the characteristic mode of the use of urban public space, which was in conformity with the traditional conception of social space; and so forth.

Yet since the research has been concentrated on the city of Suzhou alone, this study is still unable to determine conclusively which particular aspects of its development it shared with other cities, and which aspects were unique to its own history. More precise assessment of how typical the city of Suzhou was in the urban histories of the Lower Yangzi region and, further, of the whole of China, cannot be made until a sufficient number of other representative cities, both of this same region and of other macro-regions (as delineated by Skinner, for instance) have been studied extensively and in a co-ordinated way. If cities in pre-modern China

can be seen as forming a crystallised entity, a single city in history was but one of its multiple facets, through which was diffracted only a segment of the whole spectrum of an ongoing and flexible Chinese urban tradition - one that was, as Rowe (1993:15) indicates, "highly complex, almost infinitely malleable, and yet cohesive and distinctive."

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I CHINESE TEXTS BEFORE 1935

Abbreviations used in this section of the bibliography:

GTJ	*Gujin Tushu Jicheng*
PXJJ	*Pingjianglu Xinzhu Juncheng Ji*
SPCK	*Song Pingjiang Chengfang Kao*
SQ	*Siku Quanshu*
SZ	*Shisanjing Zhushu*
TJLS	*Tianxia Junguo Libing Shu*
XXX	*Xiaoxia Xianji Xuancun*
XXZ	*Xiaoxia Xianji Zhaichao*

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II CHINESE TEXTS AFTER 1935

Abbreviations used in this section of the bibliography:

CH	Cihai Bianji Weiyuanhui, (ed.) *Ci Hai*
CY	Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, Henan Ciyuan Xiudingzu, Shangwu Yinshuguan Bianjibu, (eds.) *Ci Yuan*
JC	Jiangsusheng Cehuiju
JWWY	Jiangsusheng Wu Wenhua Yanjiuhui
JYCGBW	Jianzhu Yuanlin Chengshi Guihua Bianji Weiyuanhui
LB-ZLB-SDBW	Liaoningsheng Bowuguan, Zhongguo Lishi Bowuguan, Suzhoushi Difangzhi Biancuan Weiyuanhui
SDXB	Suzhoushi Daojiao Xiehui Bianzhizu
SLB	Suzhou Lishi Bowuguan
SYG	Suzhou Yuanlin Guanliju
TDCGJ	Tongji Daxue Chengshi Guihua Jiaoyanshi
TDJGXJYS	Tongji Daxue Jianzhu Gongcheng Xi Jianzhu Yanjiu

	Shi
WW-ZCGSY	Wenhuabu Wenwuju, Zhongguo Chengshi Guihua Sheji Yanjiuyuan
WWBK	Wenhuabu Wenwu Baohu Keyansuo
ZJB	Zhongguo Jianzhushi Bianxiezu

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